

No. 43

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# ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY

## JACK LIGHTFOOT'S GREAT KICK OR THE TACKLE THAT DID NOT WORK



BY MAURICE STEVENS

Amid a breathless silence Jack caught the ball as it was snapped to him and made the greatest kick of his life.



**Publishers' Note.** "Teach the American boy how to become an athlete, and lay the foundation for a Constitution greater than that of the United States."—Wise sayings from "Tip Top." There has never been a time when the boys of this great country took so keen an interest in all manly and health-giving sports as they do to-day. As proof of this witness the record-breaking throngs that attend college struggles on the gridiron, as well as athletic and baseball games, and other tests of endurance and skill. In a multitude of other channels this love for the "life strenuous" is making itself manifest, so that, as a nation, we are rapidly forging to the front as seekers of honest sport. Recognizing this "handwriting on the wall," we have concluded that the time has arrived to give this vast army of young enthusiasts a publication devoted exclusively to invigorating out-door life. We feel we are justified in anticipating a warm response from our sturdy American boys, who are sure to revel in the stirring phases of sport and adventure, through which our characters pass from week to week.

# ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY

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## JACK LIGHTFOOT'S GREAT KICK;

OR,

## The Tackle That Did Not Work.

By MAURICE STEVENS.

### CHARACTERS IN THIS STORY.

**Jack Lightfoot**, the best all-round athlete in Cranford or vicinity, a lad clear of eye, clean of speech, and, after he had conquered a few of his faults, possessed of a faculty for *doing things* while others were talking, that by degrees caused him to be looked upon as the natural leader in all the sports Young America delights in—a boy who in learning to conquer himself put the power into his hands to wrest victory from others.

**Tom Lightfoot**, Jack's cousin, and sometimes his rival; though their striving for the mastery was always of the friendly, generous kind. Tom was called the "Book-Worm" by his fellows, on account of his love for studying such secrets of nature as practical observers have discovered and published; so that he possessed a fund of general knowledge calculated to prove useful when his wandering spirit took him abroad into strange lands.

**Ned Skeen**, of impulsive, nervous temperament, but a good friend of Jack's.

**Wilson Crane**, a long legged runner who can sprint with the ball like a frightened wild duck.

**Lafe Lampton**, a big, hulking chap, with an ever present craving for something to eat. Lafe always had his appetite along, and proved a stanch friend of our hero through thick and thin.

**Phil Kirtland**, a rival of Jack's, but who was not averse to winning a little glory at times, even if he had to share it with Lightfoot.

**Jubal Marlin**, one of Jack's friends, with a Yankee love for making money.

**Katie Strawn** and **Neillie Conner**, two Cranford girls, friends of Jack.

**Joel Thornberry**, a queer boy whose acquaintance the reader made once before.

**Saul Messenger**, who plays upon Jack's team.

**Kennedy**, the Cranford constable.

**Lee Sheldon**, captain of Highland's team.

**Ezra Littlefield**, who was once a tramp, but who has become a student solely with the idea of joining the football crowd.

### CHAPTER I.

#### FOOTBALL.

Plunk!

It was a punt, delivered by Phil Kirtland, in the moment that the Cranford line held back the rushers of Highland.

The pigskin flew through the air in the direction of the Highland goal, and the spectators roared their cheers.

The game was at Cranford, between Cranford and Highland, and was one of the hottest of the season. That is, the game was hot; the weather was cold enough for furs and overcoats.

Phil Kirtland was captain of the team; for, only the day before Thanksgiving, Jack Lightfoot had been so severely injured by a treacherous knockout blow in the back, during the progress of a game at Tidewater, that he feared to go into this affair.

He was but one of the spectators, cheering Phil and the eleven on to a hoped-for victory.



However, the victory did not seem to be coming very rapidly Cranford way.

The score was a tie—six to six; and the second half of the game was being played, with not many minutes to elapse before the whistle would bring it to a close.

It can be imagined, therefore, that this splendid punt of Phil Kirtland's was hailed with screams of applause, and that the frantic fans of Cranford continued to howl when a Highlander drove the ball back but a short distance and it was downed by a Cranford player.

"Oh, we'll win yet!" Jack exclaimed, clapping his hands.

His tanned face was flushed—his gray-blue eyes shining. In spirit, if in no other way, he was leading the Cranford eleven in that desperate fight against the Highland "Philistines."

It was an important game.

If Cranford defeated Highland that day Cranford would be the victor in the season's games.

Highland, under the brilliant leadership of its new captain, Lee Sheldon, had played marvelous football so far.

Cranford had defeated Tidewater in the two games played with that eleven; had beaten Mildale in the two games played there; and had defeated Highland once. This was the second game with Highland, and if the game was won Cranford would not have lowered her colors to any team in a single game of the season. It had been phenomenal "luck," brought about by some phenomenal playing and splendid leadership.

On the other hand, Highland had twice defeated Mildale and Tidewater, and so stood second to Cranford, having met defeat only by Cranford, in the one game it had played with the Cranford eleven.

If Highland could win to-day, Cranford and Highland would have one defeat each and each a game won against the other. And that was what plucky Lee Sheldon and his eleven were striving hard to do—beat Cranford, and tie their standing; so that if, in another game, to be played as a "rubber," they could once more defeat Cranford, *they* would be the season's victors in the Four-Town League.

Jack Lightfoot trembled with anxiety as he watched the progress of that game. Twice when men were knocked out and substitutes were put in by Cranford it seemed impossible for him to stand there and take no part in the tremendous battle. He wanted to rush in as one of the substitutes and help his team carry the ball to victory.

But he had been told by his physician that such a

course would be unwise, and his mother had exacted a promise from him to stay out of this game.

But, oh, for one-half hour of his old-time strength and fighting energy! What would he not have given for it?

The scrimmage came at the point where the ball was down.

Jack stood on tiptoe in the crowd, to watch the quick and whirling work.

Wilson Crane was in his old position as quarterback and was calling the signals.

Jack saw the figures of the players, straining and tense, as they stooped, ready for the Titanic struggle.

He saw the quick motion of the center as he sent the ball back; and the quick catch and pass of Wilson giving the ball to Phil.

Phil had dropped behind the line, and the toe of his shoe sent the ball over, while once more Cranford held the desperate Highlanders.

But the ball was not advanced, and the net result of the play was a decided loss.

Phil kicked it far enough, but a Highlander secured it and ran with it, and the ball was almost on the old line when it went down, and in the hands of Highland.

A whirlwind scrimmage came, with Highland smashing the line.

"Hold 'em!" Jack muttered, almost grinding the words through his set teeth. "Hold 'em! You've just got to hold 'em!"

He trembled with the intensity of his desire.

Lee Sheldon had shot a revolving wedge at Cranford's tackle. Highland bored a hole through there. The next minute Sheldon had broken through with the ball.

That hole in Cranford's line had been largely broken by the tremendous power of a big fellow named Littlefield, who had been added to the Highland eleven but recently, and had the strength of a giant and the crushing weight and speed of a steam engine.

It was Jack's belief that Littlefield had no right to play on the Highland eleven.

In the first place, he was a man grown, though possibly much younger than he looked. The son of a cross-grained, old farmer living near Highland, he had returned after certain wanderings; and, as a supposed tramp, he had been by Jack and the Cranford eleven permitted to play at Highland. Then he had shaved away his trampish growth of beard, entered the Highland high school, and had been promptly put on the eleven.



Jack did not believe that Littlefield had entered the school because he wanted to learn anything, but simply because he wished to get on the football team. He seemed over school age—though this he denied. Jack had protested against him; but, having weakened his protest by permitting him on the eleven at Highland, the officials turned down the protest.

There had been a good deal of talk about it, and some "hot air," and things of that kind. The reader is familiar with all such. But Littlefield was on the Highland eleven now, and it seemed that he and Lee Sheldon would win the game from Cranford, weakened as the latter was by the loss of Jack Lightfoot.

Jack's face paled perceptibly when he saw Lee Sheldon break through that hole and go down the grid-iron like a leaping hound, with the ball tucked under his arm.

Tom Lightfoot and Phil Kirtland were close upon Sheldon, but the latter was a magnificent runner.

Could they catch him?

Could either of them make a successful tackle and down him?

The football field was in a wild roar of excitement.

"Get him—get him!" Jack was whispering, unaware that his lips were moving at all.

He tiptoed to see better. In fact everyone on the grounds seemed to be craning his neck to take in that wonderful sight. Jack's eyes glittered feverishly. How he longed to be out there himself in pursuit of fleet-footed Sheldon!

Tom threw himself at Sheldon; but he missed, and fell headlong.

"Oh!" was the low exclamation that came from Jack.

Phil Kirtland came at Sheldon, who had been driven somewhat toward him by Tom's effort at a tackle.

Sheldon was clever. He swung the upper part of his body, and not his legs, as he bent away from Phil.

Phil was going too fast. He could not swerve quickly. His hands pitched for a tackle, aiming to strike Sheldon about the hips, or lower, and slide on down; but Sheldon's hips bent and seemed to slip through Phil's fingers.

Before Phil could recover, Sheldon was bounding on with the ball.

The enthusiasm of Highland broke out in a wild, ear-splitting yell.

"Go—you honey boy!" some fog-horn individual from Highland was screaming. "Go—you lulu—you darling! Go—go—go!"

He danced with delight as he yelled.

Lee Sheldon was going, with the speed of the wind. From all about, players were darting toward him; but he had the start of them, and his great speed enabled him to keep it.

A roar of victory shot up from the Highland enthusiasts.

Lee Sheldon had crossed the line!

The ball was down!

The crowds were writhing, shouting, yelling; while men looked at their watches to ascertain how much time was left of the second half.

"Wow! Highland's got 'em!" Jack heard one of the men screech.

Jack feared it was so.

His heart was jumping.

He saw the ball brought out, and saw Lee Sheldon kick it over.

"Wow!" squalled that voice again. "Highland, twelve—Cranford, six. How's that? *Three cheers for Highland!*"

The cheers were yelled, as wild animals might yelp over a victim pulled down for a feast.

Jack's eyes fairly blurred.

How he wished he could set back the hands of time for a few minutes!

Could Cranford tie the score? It could not hope to do more than that.

The ball was brought to center and kicked off; and then it was in motion again, flying before the punts of the players.

And——

The whistle blew.

The second half was over.

Cranford was defeated.

"Another game to-morrow!" said Jack, dashing forward and yelling the words.

That had been the understanding—that if another game was to be played to decide the matter it was to be played the next day.

Highland had agreed to this with considerable eagerness, feeling that if Jack was not able to play now he would be in no better condition on the day following.

But Jack had made up his mind.

He would play in the next game, and would do all in his power to lead his team to victory.

## CHAPTER II.

### A MYSTERY.

The defeat might have happened under any leadership, as Jack and everyone else knew; and, realizing



how Phil must feel about it, Jack was very generous in his praises of the really clever work Phil Kirtland had done. In the second game at Tidewater Phil had won for Cranford by splendid generalship and good personal work.

But the Cranford boys felt rather badly "cut up," for all that, and they showed it, though they affected to laugh it aside as they walked down to the station with the victorious Highlanders, where the latter were to take the train for home.

Littlefield was still roaring with joy, and Lee Sheldon did not try to conceal his pleasure.

"Oh, we'll giye you all you want to-morrow!" said Ned Skeen, unable to suppress his irritation.

Skeen had done the "heavy work" of playing substitute and not being called into the game; yet it was "his" game and "his" team, just the same.

As soon as the train had departed for Highland, bearing the victorious eleven and the cheering and enthusiastic fans, the Cranford boys scattered to different parts of the town, all talking of the game, for nothing else could be thought of just then.

Jack was about to depart from the station, when he recalled that the train from Cardiff was about due, and that Nellie Conner, who had been in Cardiff visiting Susie Powers, would arrive by it.

Therefore he lingered at the station, to walk home with her and tell her about the game; and Ned Skeen lingered with him, hoping that Nellie would bring him some message from the "Girl of the Golden Hair."

Ned was still "chewing" about the Cranford defeat, and uttering "kicks" against the "meanness" of a team that would run in as a player a fellow like Littlefield.

"The thing that you and Phil ought to have done was to refuse absolutely to play if he was on the team!" he declared, gesticulating angrily. "You bet I'd have done it! They couldn't have won, but for that. It was Littlefield that broke through the line and let Lee go through with the ball. Our fellows couldn't hold him. He's twice as big as any two of them. Of course we can't do anything if we have to play against grown men and professionals."

Ned stepped out upon the platform, for he heard the whistle of the train from Cardiff; and Jack went out with him.

When the train drew up at the station and Nellie Conner descended from one of the coaches, Jack and Ned hurried toward her, eager to tell her of the game.

"Oh, you missed it!" Jack shouted.

She laughed.

"Oh, no—I didn't miss the train; I'm here, you see!"

"But you missed seeing what was about the most exciting football game of the season."

"And the only one in which Cranford got 'beat!'" Skeen added.

Jack took her hand bag, and he and Ned walked along the platform with her, stopping in front of the baggage room at the station.

"It certainly was a great game," Jack assured, "and I'm sorry you didn't get to see it."

Her face had clouded.

"And Cranford was defeated?"

"Sure thing!" piped Skeen. "But it wasn't by fair means. They run in that big fellow, Ezra Littlefield, and that's what did the trick, together with the fact that Jack couldn't play, and——"

Jack laughed. Sometimes Ned Skeen was not quite as loyal as this, but Ned had to find some good excuse for the defeat of the team that day.

"That's too bad," said Nellie. "I wanted to see the game, but I'd promised Susie to visit her, and when you changed the date of the game that let me out. I suppose the other girls were there?"

"Sure thing!" Skeen answered. "And you'd ought to have seen Kate, after the game was lost! She almost threw a fit. I thought she was going to cry."

Ned was too much excited to think of the inelegance of his language.

"But we're going to play 'em again to-morrow. I vote for the eleven to make a high old kick against Littlefield. We can't afford to lose to-morrow."

They were standing near the baggage-room door, through which some trunks had been tumbled.

Nellie was close by one of these trunks, a large one, which had been placed just inside the doorway, and now she started nervously, for a sound seemed to come from it.

"What was that?" she asked.

"Hoopla!"

The exclamation appeared to come from within the trunk; and there could be no doubt that a squirming movement of some kind was taking place in it, for the trunk, which had been up-ended, shook and swayed and seemed about to fall over.

"Goodness! What does that mean?" she gasped.

As if in answer, the trunk lid popped open, and a body rolled into view.

It was the body of a young fellow of about sixteen, apparently.

As soon as he was out of the trunk he straightened spasmodically, puffed and threshed like a dying porpoise, and then, just as Jack and Ned were about to go



to his assistance, he drew his waving legs under him and sat up.

"Hoopla!" he shouted, very red in the face. "Where in time am I, anyhow? By all the fightin' tomcats, I don't know!"

He saw the excited young fellows, and the equally excited girl, in front of him; then heard his own name pronounced by Jack Lightfoot:

"Joel Thornberry."

"Hit the target first try!" he gurgled, faintly. "But, by jack's, I don't know you, and I don't seem to recollect a heap where I am at!"

He tried to get on his feet, staring owlshly; then whitened suddenly, and pitched forward on his face.

Jack caught him as he fell, preventing an ugly tumble, and shouted to Ned to come to his aid.

He had dropped Nellie's hand bag to the floor, and all rushed into the baggage room, which had, at that moment, no other occupants.

Joel's face was so white as he lay now on the floor that Jack was alarmed.

"Stay by him, Nellie and Ned, and I'll get a doctor. Dr. Messenger is out here somewhere."

He leaped through the doorway, and they heard his hurrying feet on the platform.

Jack had seen Dr. Messenger near the corner of the station platform as the train drew in.

As he reached the end of the platform, he beheld the doctor in his buggy some distance away, driving in the direction of the town.

"Hello!" Jack shouted, waving his arms, and adding the doctor's name.

Dr. Messenger drew rein, and waited curiously for Jack to reach him.

"You're wanted in the station—in the baggage room of the station," said Jack. "There's a young fellow there who has fallen unconscious. He was in a trunk, and——"

"In a trunk?"

"Just so. I don't understand it, but he's unconscious now, and I ran to get you."

Messenger gave his horse a cut, turning it to a near-by fence; and Jack, leaping along at the horse's head, had the bridle reins down and was tying the animal there, as the doctor swung out of his buggy.

The doctor drew a medicine case from under the buggy seat.

Then he and Jack hurried toward the station, Jack leading the way.

"I left Ned Skeen and Nellie Conner there with him," Jack informed the doctor. "You may remember

the fellow, for he was here once before. His name, is Joel Thornberry. I can't understand what he was doing in that trunk—how he got into it."

"How did he get out of it?"

"We heard him groan and say something; and then the lid flew open and he rolled out on the floor. I thought he was all right, at first; then he turned as white as a sheet and tumbled over in a faint."

"Singular case!" the doctor puffed, hurrying to keep up with Jack. "How long was this ago?"

"Just now—just a little while ago. He's in the baggage room, right ahead there. I think the trunk was put off the train."

He almost ran, when he reached the crowded platform, with the doctor trotting to keep up with him.

When they arrived at the baggage room Jack could not repress a cry of amazement.

Joel and the trunk were gone, and so was Nellie Conner and her hand bag; and Ned Skeen lay on the floor unconscious, in almost the spot which Joel had occupied. Apparently, he had been felled by a heavy blow.

"Ned—Ned!" Jack cried, rushing to him.

The doctor came hurriedly to Ned's side, and caught up his wrist, to feel the pulse, looking at the same time closely into Ned's pale face.

"I don't understand this," said Jack, so bewildered he did not know what to say or think, at the same time looking round. "What's become of Nellie and Joel—and the trunk?"

He turned to the door.

The train was ready to start, and the last trunk was being tumbled into the baggage car. Jack stared at that trunk, for it looked to be the one Joel had tumbled out of.

"Stop that trunk!" he yelled, springing toward it.

The men threw it into the car as if they did not hear him. There was a good deal of confusion, and the hissing steam from the engine and other sounds were enough to drown his words.

"Stop that trunk!" he yelled again, rushing to the door of the car.

The train began to move.

Not to be baffled, Jack climbed into the baggage car.

"I want to see about that trunk," he explained. "There's something wrong there, and I know it."

The baggage man stared at him as if he thought he had gone insane.

Jack jumped over to the trunk, which had been up-ended and stood with others near the opposite door.

"There's something wrong about this trunk," he de-



clared, earnestly, "and I'd like to have it put off, so that it can be investigated."

"Why, we can't do anything like that," the baggage man protested. "The train's going, and the trunk is checked; and how do I know it's yours, or that you have any right even to touch it? You'd better drop off, or pretty soon you'll not be able to."

Jack saw how true this was. The train was fast gathering speed. Already it had passed beyond the station.

"If there's anything wrong about the trunk, the matter can be taken up by wire," the baggage master suggested. "Send a telegram to Tidewater and have the thing looked into there."

"Yes, that's so; I can do that."

Jack sprang to the door, and, swinging out, dropped lightly to the ground.

Yet he had a strange feeling that Joel Thornberry was in that trunk, and that a quick solution of the mystery demanded that it should be held and opened.

### CHAPTER III.

#### JACK GETS BUSY.

By the time Jack Lightfoot got back to the baggage room several people had gathered there and were crowding round Dr. Messenger, who was kneeling on the floor at Ned's side.

"Get my buggy, some one; he needs to be taken home."

Jack passed on along the platform at a quick run, and, getting the doctor's buggy, drove it round to the point nearest the baggage-room door.

As he drew up there the doctor and some other men came out, carrying Ned.

Ned's face was so white and he lay so limp in the arms of the men that the thought of what it might mean went to Jack's heart like a knife stab.

"Is his condition serious?" he asked in a low tone, as he threw the reins to a man who stood near and sprang down to help the doctor and the other men.

"He was struck a heavy blow on the head with some blunt instrument," said the doctor, "and I—well, I don't like the looks of it."

A man in the crowd held up a small billet of wood.

"I found this lying there, and it may have dropped from above down on him. It's heavy, and if it did it would have knocked him out."

Jack glanced at the piece of wood.

He recalled that the upper part of the baggage room was unfinished and that he had seen there several cross

boards. It was possible that the block of wood had been up there, and had tumbled down, striking Ned on the head and laying him out.

Jack would have thought this the most likely conclusion, but for the other mysterious things which seemed to have happened. In his mind's eye he could still see Joel tumbling out of that trunk; and the question of what had become of him and also of Nellie Conner, was still unexplained.

"Has anyone seen Nellie Conner?" he asked, as he helped to lift Ned gently into the doctor's buggy.

Ned groaned, when Jack climbed in and tried to make him comfortable. The doctor was getting in carefully.

Finally a boy answered Jack's question:

"I seen her git off the train; you was with her—you met her!"

"But have you seen her since?" Jack asked.

"No."

"She's gone home, I suppose," one of the men volunteered.

Jack did not think so. But, if she had not gone home, what had become of her?

The doctor took Ned's head in his lap; and Jack drove the horse at a swinging gait in the direction of Ned's home; while some of the people showed their interest and sympathy by running along after the buggy.

Ned's mother was thrown almost into hysteria, when Ned was brought home in that condition; and asked a multitude of unanswerable questions, while she hurried frantically here and there, trying to make herself useful.

None of Jack's young friends were present, or he would have sent some one now to Nellie's home to inquire about her. He felt that he could not go at once himself, while Ned's condition called for his attention.

As soon as Ned seemed to be comfortable, with the doctor doing all that was possible, Jack hastened away, and went himself to Nellie Conner's, though he had a feeling that he would not find her there.

The house was locked, and no one was at home.

After knocking several times and getting no response, Jack went to the nearest neighbor's to make inquiry.

A pretty girl, whom he knew very well, came to the door.

"Nellie?" she said. "Why, she's in Cardiff; and her mother is away visiting somewhere, too. They both went away yesterday. I expected them back this afternoon, though."



Jack stood in hesitation, wondering if he ought to speak of the things in his mind.

"Thank you," he said, at length. "If Nellie comes soon, just tell her I called, will you?"

He lifted his hat and turned away, and the girl went back into the house.

"Well, this is a go!"

He was more anxious than he was willing to admit even to himself. What had befallen Nellie Conner, if anything? Had anything happened to her? It was more than strange, it seemed to him, that she should have disappeared from that baggage room in that mysterious manner.

And—what had become of Joel Thornberry?

While hastening back toward the station, Jack turned these puzzles over in his mind, without getting much satisfaction.

As for Joel Thornberry, he was a most peculiar boy, as Jack had discovered when he had been in Cranford before.

Joel had come there then with some men who were putting up patent medicine advertisements, plastering the fences and blank walls with them. Two of these men Joel had overheard planning to rob the house of Norwell Strawn, and he had taken an active part in thwarting the robbery and in bringing the robbers to justice.\*

When Jack reached the station again, he found the platform almost deserted. Two men only were there, in addition to the station agent and telegrapher and the baggage man.

These two men were standing in front of the ticket window discussing the "accident" to Ned Skeen; and, seeing Jack, they hailed him.

"How did that happen?" one asked.

"I wish you'd tell me," was Jack's reply.

"Then you don't know anything about it?"

"No more than you do."

"Jim Keen thought that piece of wood fell down and hit him on the head. It was mighty heavy."

"Nothing of the kind," objected the ticket agent, who apparently felt called on to defend the company that employed him.

Jack passed on to the baggage room, where he found the baggage man pushing some trunks about.

"You noticed that last trunk you put into the car, just as the train was ready to pull out?" Jack asked.

The baggage man turned round sharply.

"Yes; and what in thunder were you trying to do, asking the fellow in the car to put it off?"

"Well, there's a mystery about that trunk," said Jack, quite frankly, "and perhaps you can help me to see through it. In the first place, was that trunk put off here?"

"Not off that train."

"No?"

"It was put off the one before it. The owner was a traveling man, I think. He left the trunk here, and went uptown; and then came back and had it checked and put into the car when you saw it."

"What became of him?"

"Went in the train, I suppose?"

"Do you remember the ticket he showed? He had to show a ticket to get the trunk checked."

"I think it was for Tidewater. Anything the matter with the trunk?"

"Well, I should say so! When Ned Skeen and Nellie Conner and I came along here, where we stopped for a few minutes right by this door, we heard a groan from that trunk, and some words; and then the lid of the trunk flew open and a young fellow rolled out of it."

"What?"

"Sure thing. He seemed dazed; and just when we were going to help him he tumbled over unconscious. Ned and Nellie stayed by him, or were to, while I ran to get Dr. Messenger, who happened to be near. But when I got back with the doctor, Nellie and that fellow were both gone, and Ned was lying there as you saw him."

The man's face was a study. He stopped rolling the trunk he had been putting further back into the room, and, letting it rock over, turned and stared Jack full in the face.

"Is that so?"

"If it isn't, I never spoke the truth."

"Well," he spoke slowly; "I suppose all that could be, and still there would be nothing very strange about it, except the young fellow rolling out of the trunk. They don't usually ship people in trunks. But Miss Conner could have gone on home, and the young fellow could have come to himself and cut out. He may have had good reason to want to."

"Miss Conner didn't go home."

"No?"

"I've just come from her house, and she isn't there."

"She may be uptown."

"Yes, that's so."

"And as for Ned, he may have been hit by that piece

\*See No. 33, "Jack Lightfoot's Cleverness; or, The Boy Who 'Butted In.'" Joel Thornberry was the boy who "butted in" so effectively in this story.



of timber falling down on him. What became of that, anyway? Jim Keen had it."

"He's got it yet, I suppose?"

Jack and the man looked up at the boards lying loosely on the crossbeams over their heads.

"I don't know that it could have happened," said the baggage man, "but when the train started it may have jarred the station and thrown that stick down. If Ned was standing right under it, it may have knocked him out."

Still, he looked puzzled.

"But—what in Sam Hill was that young fellow doing in the trunk?" he went on. "He must have been put in there by some one!"

"I think so. You may have seen him when he was here before, early in the fall. He was that young fellow who came with the men who were sticking up patent medicine posters, and got mixed up in that attempt to burglarize Strawn's house."

"Oh, him? Yes, I remember him!"

He glanced about as if he half expected to see Joel Thornberry hiding in a corner.

Jack looked at him thoughtfully.

"The next train's due in less than twenty minutes, I believe. I'm going to wire to Tidewater about that trunk. The baggage man on the train suggested that, and——"

He did not finish, but hurried to the telegraph office.

When he came up to the window there, he beheld Mack Remington. Mack's "nose for news" had already scented a sensation, and he was down there to get the particulars.

"Just the fellow I want to see!" cried Jack.

"And you're just the fellow I want to see."

Mack had his pencil and pad of paper out.

"What about that?" he demanded; "about Ned getting knocked out?"

"Just wait till I send this telegram."

Jack began to scribble on a telegraph blank, and then tearing it off pushed it through the window to the telegrapher.

"Just hurry that along," he urged, paying for it. "I want that trunk held at the station there until this thing can be investigated."

Mack had tiptoed and read the contents of the telegram at a glance.

Jack caught him by the arm and drew him away from the window.

"There's something here—maybe a sensation for your paper. I don't know how Ned got hurt, and no

one does. When he comes out of it he'll be able to clear that up himself."

"Bad hurt?"

"I'm afraid so."

"Gee!"

"And there's a mystery on top of it. He was left there, with Nellie Conner, to take care of a young fellow named Joel Thornberry. You remember him; he was mixed up in that attempt to burglarize Strawn's house early in the fall. The fellows with him tried to do the job, and he gave them away."

"Yes; I wrote that up for the *Guardian*. Had more than a column of it."

"Well, while Nellie and Ned and I were standing by the baggage-room door we heard a groan from a big trunk, and the next we knew the lid of the trunk popped off and Joel Thornberry came rolling out on the floor. He tried to straighten up, but tumbled over, and I ran for the doctor. When I got back he and Nellie were both gone, and Ned was lying there insensible. That's all I know; except that the trunk was bundled into the baggage car of the train that's now on its way to Tidewater; and that's why I sent that telegram, for I want the trunk held there and examined."

"Gee!" Mack gurgled, his eyes wide with astonishment.

"And the thing I want you to do, is to find out what has become of Nellie. She didn't go home, for I've just been there to see. None of her folks are at home. Get Lafe and Tom and Nat, and any others you can, and see what it means. I'm going to take the next train to Tidewater."

He pulled an old envelope from his pocket and began to write on the back of it.

"Give that to my mother. The train will be here in a few minutes, and I haven't time to go up to the house. I'll be back to-night."

"And wire me," begged Mack, taking the envelope. "Say, this is a sensation for fair!"

He scribbled some notes on his pad.

"Keep Nellie's name out of it," Jack urged.

"I'm going up to Ned's, and I'll leave this with your mother on the way," Mack promised. "Gee! a whole bunch of sensations! Pap says it never rains but it pours."

"And go to Nellie's. She may have gone home after I was there."

"Yet you don't think she did?"

"I don't know what to think."

"Nor I. But that fellow in the trunk! That's a



corker. I'd like to have seen that. It will loom up in the headlines. The *Guardian* is 'yellow,' you know, and they'll spread that all over the first page."

He jerked out his watch, and compared it with the railway clock.

"No use waiting round here, I suppose? I've got to write this up so far as I can, and get it on the next train to Cardiff. I can wire later particulars, if I get the body of it in early by mail. Ta, ta! I'm going."

He went—on the run.

#### CHAPTER IV.

JOEL THORNBERRY.

The news of the "accident" to Ned Skeen, with hints of a mystery concerning a trunk and certain strange disappearances, had already begun to circulate through Cranford, magnified many times, and twisted, also, out of all semblance to the real facts, by the time the train came which Jack was to take for Tidewater.

Jack had been out in town again; and several persons, seeing him as he swung to a car platform, made a rush at him, to learn what he knew.

But they were too late, for Jack had been himself tardy, and the train was already in motion. He was glad of it, for he did not care to discuss the misty subject. He was all at sea himself, and so felt that he could give no light to anyone.

Hurrying on into the car, he took a seat by a window, and looked out into the streets.

Some lights were showing in the business houses, and darkness was near at hand.

"If that trunk was held at Tidewater, I don't know what I can do about it, unless the owner shows up. I won't have any right to open it, or demand that it shall be opened."

He leaned back in the seat, thinking the thing over, as the train gathered headway.

"I wish I had Kennedy with me; but I didn't know where to go to look for him."

Tom Kennedy, the Cranford constable, was a reliable, sensible man, and was, also, one of Jack's best friends.

Darkness came before the train reached Tidewater, that lively town down by the sea, where Jack's football and baseball boys had more than once struggled for victory.

Jack's first point was the baggage room, which he entered while the baggage handlers were busy with the incoming trunks. He had a sense of disappointment when he could not find the trunk he sought.

As soon as the baggage master appeared, Jack approached him on the subject of the telegram.

"I got your telegram, all right," was the answer, "but the trunk you mentioned didn't arrive; or, if it did, I didn't recognize it from the description. Do you know the check number?"

"I don't."

"Then how do you expect to identify it?"

"By its looks."

"Look round, then. See it anywhere?"

Jack had already looked round.

"Several trunks were taken away?" he asked.

"Yes; a half dozen, probably."

"Have you got the telegram?"

The man produced it.

Jack looked it over, and saw that he had given an accurate description of the trunk.

"You're sure that no such trunk came here?"

"Pretty sure. But those big trunks are so much alike, you know. What did you want it held for?"

Jack told him.

"Better see an officer, then, if there's anything crooked about it. But I feel pretty sure that trunk didn't come here."

As Jack turned to leave the baggage room he was given a gratifying shock of surprise.

Joel Thornberry stood outside on the platform, looking about curiously, as if seeking some one.

As the light of the station lamp fell in Jack's face Joel stared, then rushed forward.

"Hoopla! Glad I've met up with ye ag'in."

He held out his hand, rough and freckled, and spread his mouth in a smile.

"Been looking round to see if I knowed anyone here, and then snapped my optics onto you."

Jack accepted the proffered hand, at the same time searching Joel's face closely.

"I followed you, I guess," he said; "at any rate, I followed that trunk, or tried to. I'm all balled up about it, too, and about you. Hope you can enlighten me?"

"Seeking inflammation, eh? So'm I. What trunk you talkin' about?"

"The one you tumbled out of at Cranford a couple of hours ago."

"Wow! You seen that?"

"Sure thing."

"Well, by jacks, that was the funniest ever! But come along, and I'll tell ye about it. What you been doin' since I saw you last? Nighabout three months ago that was, I guess."



"It would be harder to tell what I haven't been doing."

"Same here. I've been into about every old thing. Now I'm a detective."

"A detective?"

"Yep. Amatoor, you know; jist galivanting along on my own hook." He winked one big eye. "Only been at it about ten or fifteen hours, I reckon. I started this morning, and here's night. Been at it all day, ye see. What you doin' up here? This ain't your town, is it? Oh, I reckon—you said you'd been follerin' that trunk. Well, by jacks, it's got away from me! Know where it is?"

"I don't."

"Nor I."

"The first time I saw it you were in it and rolled out of it, and when I saw it last it was being tumbled into the baggage car of that train, bound for this place."

Jack was studying Joel Thornberry even while he gave this bit of information. He had never seen Joel but on one memorable occasion, and so did not know how far it was safe to trust him, or whether he could be relied on to speak the truth at all times.

Yet he wanted to get at the heart of this apparent mystery; and now he asked plumply a question that Joel seemed anxious to evade:

"What were you doing in that trunk?"

Joel again winked one big eye.

"Travelin' in it."

"Not when I saw you."

"Jist then I was restin', I reckon. I don't seem to reckon very well about that. Jever travel in a trunk?"

"Never."

"Well, you needn't want to! There's more comfortable ways of goin', when you've got to go. I'd never tried it if I'd thought the thing all out ahead. I didn't, and I come nigh gittin' my ticket straight through to Kingdom Come."

"I thought you had that ticket when you tumbled over in a faint there in the baggage room. But you haven't answered my question."

Jack's tone showed his anxiety.

"S'pose I don't care to answer it?"

"I'd like to have you?"

"How're you interested in it, anyhow? That's what stalls me."

"Just this way," said Jack, tightening his clutch on Joel's arm. "A friend of mine was knocked on the head there in that baggage room, and we found him

lying just where you were when I last saw you there. It happened while I was gone to get a doctor for you."

"Did you really jump to bring a sawbones to me?"

"I did."

Joel whirled round, gratified and surprised, and, jerking his arm away, extended his hand.

"Shake!" he cried. "I tie to the feller that's willin' to assist me."

But again Joel was evading an answer to that question.

"I didn't finish," said Jack.

"Oh, ye didn't?"

"There was a girl with me and that fellow who was knocked out. They stayed with you, while I ran to get the doctor. When I got back with the doctor you and the girl were gone, and the fellow lay there on the floor unconscious."

"Mebbe I run away with the girl!"

"No, you didn't?"

"How d'ye know I didn't?"

"She isn't that kind."

"Oh, she wouldn't take up with the likes of me?" He glanced down at his not too neat clothing, and winked again. "But I'm a duke in disguise, ye know; heir to the dukedom of Thingummy, in the Graustark Mountains—if you know where that is. I ran away from home because they was too good for me. They hung gold chains round my neck and wouldn't let me play with the peasant children in the mud. Jever play in the mud and make mud pies? Well, they wouldn't let me do that, and I flew the coop."

"But answer me," cried Jack; "what were you doing in the trunk? And for Heaven's sake, if you can tell me anything about that girl, tell me quick!"

"Anxious about her?"

"I am—very anxious."

"Sweetheart?"

"A very good friend, anyway."

"Say, by jacks, this is jist like a novel, or one of them plays you see from the galleries, while you throw peanuts at the bald-headed men down in front, ain't it? I roll out of a trunk, where I ain't no business to be, and flop over dead; and when you come from gitting the doctor I've jumped the whole establishment with your ladylove that you left there to keep the flies off me while I was dying. Hoopla! I'll work that into a play myself, if you don't hurry and git it copyrighted."

Jack felt that this rather ragged young fellow was laughing at him.

"Answer my questions, can't you?" he urged.

"What was it?"



"My first question was, how you happened to be in that trunk?"

"Let that go, and ask the second one."

"Do you know what became of that girl? You must have noticed her there, for you saw me and spoke to me, just before you tumbled over in that faint."

"Did I faint?"

"I think you did."

"Then it's the first time I ever fainted in my life."

"But the girl?"

"I don't know the first thing about her."

"You haven't seen her?"

"Nit."

"Now, the first question?"

"Let it go, and ask the third one."

"What are you doing here?"

"Walking along with you, see."

"You know what I mean."

"Well, old pal, if you've got to have it, I'm huntin' fer a man that I've got business with."

"Did you come here in that trunk?"

"Nit. But lemme tell you what I did when I got out of it."

"All right, go ahead."

"Well, I come to myself, layin' there in the baggage room, and as I did so I took a look through that door. Recklect that door?"

"Yes, of course."

"I took a look through that door, and seen a man that I wanted pretty bad. So I jumps up and makes a break for him, without sayin' good-by to the two young turtle doves that had been left there by you to watch me. Soon as I got outside I'd lost my man. I thought he got into one of the cars; and so I jumps for the cars. While I was goin' through 'em huntin' fer him the train pulled out, and it brought me to this place. I ain't met up with him yet."

"That's the truth?"

"So help me, Joshua!"

They had walked to the end of the long platform, and now turned round to saunter back.

"Perhaps we can help each other," Jack suggested. "Tell me why you got into that trunk."

Joel laughed in a queer way.

"Well, I done that to see if it wasn't possible to beat the railroad company. If it could be worked, two fellers could travel on one ticket—one in the regular car, and the other in the trunk in the baggage car—see?"

In this, at least, Jack knew that Joel was fabricating.

"Perhaps we can work together. I'm certainly

searching for that girl and the trunk, and you're looking for the trunk as well as a certain man. What do you say, if we pool our interests?"

"That's O K," said Joel. "If you can help me, I'm willin'."

## CHAPTER V.

NELLIE CONNER.

Jack had had no supper; and, though his excitement was still feverish, he suggested now to Joel that they should seek a restaurant and get something to eat.

"Ag'in I'm willin'," was Joel's answer.

Joel ate ravenously.

Jack was about to pay the bill for both himself and this eccentric youth, when Joel pulled out a purse.

"Nit!" he protested, putting up a hand. "I'm not on the hog—see? I make it a p'int never to be under obligations to anybody. You're all right, but we'll git along together better if you don't git a sneakin' notion under your cap that I'm not able to hoe my own row."

It was the same spirit of independence which Jack had witnessed in Joel when he was in Cranford that first time.

Jack looked at his watch, as they left the restaurant together.

"I'm going back to Cranford. Now, what are you going to do?"

"Air you goin' to give up chasin' the princess?"

"I can't find her here."

"I reckon I'll stay here. Maybe I'll see you in Cranford later."

"Telegraph me, if you learn anything."

"I'll do it."

They went together into the office; and there Jack, was given a telegram.

"Just received," said the operator.

It was from Mack Remington.

"Nothing doing here. Could she have been in trunk? Wire me. Rush."

The suggestion that Nellie Conner had been thrust into the trunk had already come to Jack Lightfoot, only to be put aside by him.

"Wow!" cried Joel, when he was shown the message.

"What do you think of it?"

"Well, she could have been put in it, all right. It was fitted fer a person to travel in—had holes to let in air fer breathin' purposes, and all that; and a little catch on the inside to shoot the lock open, if the one



in there wanted to git out bad. But I don't reckon she was in the trunk."

"Nor I."

Jack scribbled a few words on a blank and gave it to the operator to wire to Mack:

"No trail here. Shall return to Cranford at once. Keep name out of paper."

A freight had run in from a siding and was about to pull out for Cranford; and now, with a wave of the hand to Joel and a parting injunction for him to wire if anything turned up, Jack swung to the steps of the caboose.

The night was bright and fine, with a good moon riding high and bringing out the points of the landscape almost as clearly as day, as the slow freight train crept out of the town of Tidewater, and went like a crawling snake across the flat marshlands along the Malapan River.

Jack had bought no ticket, and he stood outside on the rear platform.

"A fine night," was the remark of the conductor, as he came out there to collect the fare.

Then he retreated, leaving Jack to think over the situation, while the freight train roared on its way toward Cranford.

Between Tidewater and Cranford was a small place called Midway, though it was nearer Cranford than Tidewater.

It was but a siding, with a water tank, and a few houses, and the station standing close up by the track.

Jack was in no happy frame of mind, and was puzzling over the mystery that had bewildered and troubled him, when the train pulled through Midway without stopping, yet at a somewhat slower pace.

And there, on the station platform, outlined in the moonlight, Jack beheld the trunk he had chased vainly to Tidewater; and, standing by it, was Nellie Conner!

Jack fairly reeled with astonishment.

He looked down at the speeding ground. The train was not going to stop; but he was resolved that he would stop, if he had to go off those caboose steps with a header, like diving into the sea.

He swung down from the steps, holding with one hand and putting down one foot. Then he released his hold.

He was expert at getting off a moving train in that way; and, though he struck heavily on the sandy embankment, and for a minute his legs were driven along like flying spokes, he stopped himself without a fall.

The train roared on; and Jack turned back toward

the station, which he had passed, running at a good gait.

What was Nellie doing there by that trunk? Another minute would settle that question, he thought.

But when he reached the platform Nellie was gone.

The trunk stood just where he had seen it, but she had disappeared.

He ran up to the trunk, as if that might give him an answer, and was beginning to wonder if his eyes could have tricked him, when he heard the roll of buggy wheels. They sounded behind the station, and Jack passed on round at a dead run.

A buggy was moving away from the station.

"Coo—ee!" Jack yelled, giving the old Cranford cry, which Nellie knew as well as any of the Cranford boys.

The buggy came to a stop, and Jack ran up to it.

Yes, there was Nellie Conner, sitting in the vehicle alone, holding the lines.

Her eyes opened in wide surprise, when she saw Jack.

"How do you come to be here?" she asked.

"How do you come to be here?"

"Well, that's easily answered. Get in, will you?" She made room for him on the seat.

He climbed in eagerly.

"Shall I drive on?" she asked.

"Tell me first what you're doing here?"

"I know something has happened at home, to bring you here!" she said. "But I'll tell you. Mother came to the station there while I was waiting with Ned, you know, and hurried me to the train, for we had to come to Midway at once, to see my aunt, who is ill here. I told Ned to tell you."

"Oh!"

The explanation was so simple.

"Just now I have been to the station to meet that freight from Tidewater. I thought it would stop, and I was expecting a relative from Tidewater. My aunt lives out here, just a short distance. I had started to drive there, you see, when I heard your call. Well, you could have knocked me down with a feather when I saw you."

Yet she seemed very much pleased to see him.

"Are you in a great hurry?" Jack asked. "If not, drive back to the station. You saw that trunk there—the one you were standing by when the train passed."

She began to turn the horse about.

"I was on the freight," he explained; "standing on the rear platform of the caboose. I saw you there, and I jumped off."



"What a risk!" she exclaimed.

But her cheeks flushed; she was gratified and pleased to know that he had so much desired to see her.

"There's a mystery connected with that trunk, you know, and with you," he went on. "That's the trunk that fellow tumbled out of at Cranford."

"Is it? I didn't notice it much. And you count me in a mystery?"

"I'll tell you about it."

"But, first," she asked, "how is that fellow? He had recovered consciousness again, and seemed all right; but I had to go, you know, when mother came for me. I was sorry I couldn't stay to tell you, but she hurried me into the train; and Ned was to tell you."

"The fellow is all right—I saw him a while ago, in Tidewater. But now it's Ned Skeen. When I got back, you and Joel Thornberry were gone, and Ned was lying there on the floor, unconscious from a blow on the head."

"What?" she cried. "You don't mean it. Why, how did that happen?"

"We don't know. But the fact that you were gone was the strangest thing of all, apparently. It was no mystery at all, I see now; but we thought all sorts of things—even to suspecting that perhaps *you* had been put in that trunk! It was tumbled into the baggage car, and brought here. And you can imagine how I felt, after going to Tidewater to search for you, half fearing you had been knocked senseless like Ned and put into the trunk, to see you on the station here, standing right by that same old trunk."

"It must have been something like seeing a ghost," she answered, for she was intelligent, and able to understand how such a discovery would affect anyone.

Then she asked many questions—about Ned, and Joel, and others; so that by the time they had arrived again at the station she was pretty well informed on the subject.

"Now, we'll see if that trunk has run away while we were gone," she remarked, as the horse stopped.

Jack swung down, hitched the horse to a post, and helped her from the buggy.

Then they walked with quick steps round to the front of the station.

There they were given another surprise. A man was standing by the trunk, which he had tipped over; and he seemed to be examining it closely, while he uttered a string of oaths.

"Not my trunk!" they heard him say. "Then where in thunder is my trunk?"

"We'll see who he is," Jack suggested.

He took Nellie's arm, and they walked together along the platform.

Suddenly he felt her arm tremble.

"Come away!" she whispered, trying to draw back.

Jack pushed on, for he wanted to get a look at the man's face.

"He'll not hurt us!" he urged.

She summoned her courage anew. Apparently, she was resolved now to get a look into this man's face; and she lagged no more, but stepped briskly, though nervously, at Jack's side.

"Your trunk?" said Jack, speaking to the man.

The man peered into Jack's face, and then into Nellie's.

When he thus thrust his face at her, Nellie drew back with a little cry, as if alarmed or frightened.

Another oath, fierce and terrible this time, came from the man's lips.

"So, you're follering me, are you?" he demanded.

"I don't know what you mean," said Jack.

"Well, I know what you mean—and her!"

Then he swung a blind blow at Jack, which the latter evaded, backing along the platform at the same time with the frightened girl.

Nellie drew her arm from Jack's and ran, screaming.

"I'll settle with you!" the man growled, swinging again at Jack, as the latter retreated, following Nellie. "You follered me here all right, and so did she!"

A revolver came out, and Jack saw it glitter in the moonlight. He was about to jump at the hand which held the revolver; when the man turned suddenly, and, running round the end of the station, disappeared.

Nellie Conner was almost in hysterics when Jack reached her. She had gained the buggy and was trying to climb into it, though she had not untied the horse from the post.

## CHAPTER VI.

### JACK LIGHTFOOT'S DISAPPEARANCE.

"Let me help you in," Jack urged, seeing how frightened she was; and, taking her by the arm, he assisted her into the buggy.

Then he untied the horse.

"Where—where is he?" she gasped.

"Did you know him?"

"Know him? He's the man who robbed my uncle's farmhouse the other day and tried to kill him. I was there at the time, and saw him then. You remember about that?"



Jack remembered it, and recalled that the burglar had not been caught.

"He recognized you," said Jack.

"And thought we were tracking him—that we had come here to follow him."

"But he's gone now," Jack urged. "He ran."

"He'll come back again, and perhaps follow us."

"I think not. He was more scared than we were, I imagine."

Jack took the reins, and turned the horse away from the station.

Nellie Conner had not the superb courage of Kate Strawn. If Kate had been there, she probably would have urged a pursuit of the villain who had fled out into the darkness. Nellie's only thought was to get away from the station as quickly as she could.

Yet there were times when Nellie had shown rare bravery. But those were times when her fears for the safety of some one overpowered her fears for herself. Once, so stirred, she had stood up heroically in front of runaway horses, to protect Jack Lightfoot, who at the moment lay in the road unconscious and in the way of the maddened brutes. But, having done that, her strength passed, her throat choked, and she felt that she was fainting.

"Drive fast!" she begged now, as the horse started.

Jack touched it with the whip.

"I'd like to see what became of that man," he urged.

"No—no! Let him go. He's a dangerous man."

"He thought that was his trunk."

"I shan't be able to go to the station again, no matter what happens," she said; "and I'm afraid for you to go back there. You wouldn't want to drive through to Cranford?—to-morrow, I mean; you couldn't go to-night."

But Jack's strong will and courage largely overcame her fears before the drive to the house where her mother was staying was completed.

Nevertheless, she objected to his return to the station; which he had already decided on, and which he carried out as soon as he saw her safe in the house, with the horse in the care of a man there.

"I'm almost afraid for you to go!" she urged. "Keep away from him, if you see him."

"I'm going to put Kennedy on his track," was his answer. "I may not see him again; probably won't. I've got to get home, though, to-night, you know; mother will be expecting me. Good-by. Don't worry."

"Good-by!" she said.

And her lips and cheeks were white.

She stood watching him, as he went down the road in the moonlight; and she watched him until the darkness swallowed him there.

An oppressive fear was on her heart.

Was it prophetic?

Perhaps so; for it was many hours after that before any of Jack's friends beheld him again.

He walked out in to the darkness there, and simply disappeared. He did not return to Cranford.

\* \* \* \* \*

Nellie Conner prepared to go by train to Cranford, the next morning.

Her aunt was better; and Nellie was so anxious to return home that her mother consented.

One of the farm boys drove her down to the station; and talked a good deal with her, on the way, about the burglar she had seen on the Midway platform.

She was anxious to hear from Jack, whom she supposed in Cranford, and anxious to learn if Joel Thornberry had made any discoveries during the night.

She was somewhat gratified, therefore, when she saw Joel standing on the Midway platform. In a way, it was as much of a surprise as when Jack had appeared before her there the previous evening.

Close by Joel was the trunk that had been so much in evidence since that spectacular moment when he rolled out of it in the Cranford baggage room. He seemed to be watching that trunk.

Joel did not see her, or affected not to, until she spoke to him.

"Hoopla!" he exclaimed, then, whirling round, while an expansive smile overspread his face. "Think of angels, and it's a sure sign you'll see one."

Nellie flushed at the compliment.

"It's a funny thing that you're here," he said. "Last time I seen you was in that station at Cranford."

She tried to laugh.

"And there's where I saw you last."

"Yes, so it was. I got out of my travelin' bag there."

"You told Jack Lightfoot that when you started after that man you left me there with Ned Skeen?"

"Hoopla! You seen him? Well, yes, so I did."

"Yet, as a matter of fact, I started first, and left Ned Skeen watching you."

He scratched his head.

"By jacks, I reckon you're right! But I was so tangled in my coco just then that I didn't know anything clearly. Where is Jack? He been here?"

Nellie did not know just how far to trust Joel; but she said:



"He was here. He left Tidewater for Cranford on the freight last evening, but jumped off here, when he saw me standing here, and saw that trunk. I came here to see my aunt, who is sick; and now I'm on my way back to Cranford."

"Funny about that trunk!" exclaimed Joel, eyeing it. "I'm watchin' it."

"Afraid it will get away from you?"

"No; but it's *my* trunk, and how it got here's a mystery to me. I found it here just by accident, when I came here. And I was told that a man had come for it, and then had gone away without takin' it. I'm hopin' he'll come back. That's why I'm waiting."

Joel remained on the platform at Midway, still waiting, when Nellie got aboard the train for Cranford.

When she arrived at Cranford, she was given a telegram.

Joel had sent it, and it had reached there ahead of her.

It ran:

"Got on trail of man. I believe he's done something to Jack. Is Jack in Cranford?"

This threw Nellie Conner into a flutter of alarm; and she was a badly frightened girl, when she discovered, shortly, that Jack was not in Cranford, had not been there, and that no one could guess what had become of him.

## CHAPTER VII.

### JACK LIGHTFOOT MISSING.

Nellie could not reply to Joel Thornberry's telegram until she had made inquiries for Jack.

Hence, more than half an hour went by before she sent this message:

"Jack not here. Push search for him. Get men to help. Officer coming from here."

The officer was Kennedy, the constable, who had been promptly called into the case by Tom Lightfoot.

The news that something had befallen Jack Lightfoot spread over Cranford with the rapidity of a fire running through dry grass.

The football boys, and Jack's other friends, began to gather at the station.

It was then about nine o'clock.

No other word had come from Joel, and, when he still delayed answering, Tom wired to the station agent at Midway, and sent a telegram to Nellie's mother, asking if Jack had called at her house that morning.

Then Tom, Lafe Lampton, Jubal Marlin and some others, took the first train for Midway, when answers came that Jack had not been seen.

When they arrived there Joel was not to be found. The trunk remained on the platform unclaimed, and the station agent knew nothing. He had seen no one near it, except Joel.

"I have a feeling that we're all on a wild-goose chase," was Lafe Lampton's statement. "Jack's hunting for some one, and has got out into the country where he couldn't send word. You'll find that's the right of it."

Tom did not think so. It was not like Jack to keep his friends in the dark concerning his movements. Jack would be particularly anxious to inform his mother, so that she might know where he was and not be anxious about him. That he had done nothing of the kind was, Tom argued, a proof that something very wrong had happened.

The noon hour came and passed before Tom and those with him gave up their fruitless search in Midway.

But Tom Kennedy, who had arrived with some deputies, continued it.

"It's a football scheme," said Kennedy. "This is the day of the game, you know. Those Highland chaps have got some one to hold Jack somewhere until the game is over. Skeen's better, but not able to play; and, with Jack out, the team would be badly weakened."

"Skeen was only a substitute," objected Lafe. "And he says that he thinks that stick of wood fell down and hit him. He's pretty sure of that. So, there was no scheme against him."

"There's one against Jack, all right!" Kennedy maintained, with characteristic obstinacy. "So, I say, the thing for you fellows to do is to get back to Cranford and win the game. Jack will turn up all right this evening."

"You'll continue the search here?" Tom asked, anxiously.

"Oh, yes, I'll do that; but it's football, sure thing. I said so, from the first. A lot of these hoodlum players who think that the way to defeat another team is to cripple it, will have to be sent to the penitentiary before they learn a lesson."

Tom and Lafe and the others returned by the first train to Cranford.

It was two o'clock when they got there, and the game was to be called at three.



The Highland Philistines were on the grounds, and were doing some practice and signal work under their captain, Lee Sheldon.

Sheldon flushed and looked surprised, and also indignant, when he heard of Jack Lightfoot's disappearance.

"Do you think we'd go into a thing of that kind?" he demanded of Lafe, who was one of the number approaching him with the news.

"You wouldn't," Lafe admitted; "but some of your crowd aren't any too good for it."

"I think they are, myself!" Sheldon snapped, not pleased.

Then he shot a suspicious glance at Lafe.

"Is this just a scheme to get out of playing to-day?"

"Not on your life!" Lafe declared, warmly.

"But you were going to suggest a postponement of the game? I know it from your manner."

"Yes, we were," Lafe admitted. "While this hunt is on, and the whole town is torn up, we won't have any crowd, and none of us will feel like playing."

Sheldon gave him another suspicious look.

"You're sure this isn't just a scheme to put the game off and give you fellows more time to get ready for it?"

Lafe reddened, angrily.

"What do you take us for? A set of robbers?"

"That's what you seem to think my men are!" Sheldon retorted.

He hesitated a moment.

"No," he declared, his voice rising, "we don't give way to-day! We're here to play the game; and we're ready to play it, if not a spectator is on the ground."

"But if we refuse?" said Tom.

"I shall ask the officials to declare that the game is Highland's."

Lafe was the head of a committee, sent to see how the Highlanders felt on the subject of postponing the game.

They returned, to report, to the other members, who were down in the high-school gym, that gym having been selected for the noisy meeting now going on there because it was more centrally located than the academy gym.

Phil Kirtland was in charge of the meeting, and was

seated in Jack's chair, as presiding officer, when Lafe and his committee came in to report.

A roar of indignation went up when the report was made.

"That's all right," said Phil, rising. "I don't know whether this is a trick of Highland to put Jack out of the game, or whether Sheldon is as honest as he seems to be, but I'm in favor of playing the game. We don't want that crowd to go howling round that we're afraid to meet them."

Phil Kirtland was altogether too manly a fellow to wish Jack harm in that manner; yet he could not help hoping the captaincy of the team would be his that day.

He had captained the team during a portion of the game which had been won at Tidewater. He had also captained it when it had lost the day before, in Cranford, against Highland. Now he wanted to lead it again, feeling that here was a chance to win a victory; and that if such a victory was won the credit would be his.

The old jealousy against Jack still rankled at times in Phil's breast. He did not believe that Jack was his superior as a player, or as a leader; and he felt sure there were others in Cranford, and on the eleven, who thought the same.

A noisy meeting followed the report of the committee.

Ned Skeen was there, white and weak; but he took part in the meeting, and voted to play Highland, when the votes were called for. Yet Ned was one who believed that something serious had happened to Jack.

The majority, however, seemed to feel that Jack's disappearance was a Highland trick, and that he would appear, unharmed, after the game was over.

"We'll show 'em that we can win without him!" shouted Brodie Strawn, defiantly. "A few errors yesterday lost that game; but they would have been made just the same, even if he had led the team. I don't believe in this one man business. No one man is necessary to this team, or to any other team."

Brodie was still Phil's backer.

Wilson Crane also backed Phil, and there were others. Even Tom Lightfoot was not willing to post-



pone the game, though he had full faith in Jack, and was now sorely troubled by fears for his safety.

"There's this about it," he said, rising to express himself, and explain his vote. "Everyone who knows Jack will know that if he could be heard from he would say for us to go ahead and play Highland this afternoon. He would expect us to play, and would expect us to win; and he would want Phil to take the place of captain. I know that, as well as I know that I'm standing here. So, though I'm worried about him, I'm willing to go ahead, and do what he'd want us to do."

The declaration was greeted with a cheer.

"And if we find that Highland has had a hand in holding Jack," said Saul Messenger, bobbing up his shock of yellow hair and his fiery eyes, "we'll simply go after them, and we'll pound the tar out of them. We're the boys that can do it."

Lafe laughed, and dropped some peanut kernels into his mouth.

Saul loved to fight quite as well as Lafe loved to eat.

"Then we meet Highland this afternoon, fellows?" said Phil, when the vote was taken. "That's the understanding, and that suits me. Now we'll adjourn; and you bet we'll give 'em all they want."

Then the meeting broke up with cheering, and the boys filed out of the gym.

The Cranford boys were still trying to make themselves believe that Jack would appear, unharmed, when the game was over.

Nevertheless, fears that they were mistaken, together with the fact that they missed Jack's inspiring presence, told on their spirits.

They were not joking and laughing—a pall of gloom seemed to have settled down upon them.

Phil Kirtland spurred them on in some practice work; but their hearts were apparently not in it.

"Fellows," urged Phil, smiling, "wipe the shadows off your faces! We've got some lively work cut out for us, if we win to-day."

Naturally, Phil did not like to lead a team that seemed depressed.

Jubal cackled out his old laugh to encourage Phil and the team.

In spite of the coldness of the day, the parrot had been brought out by Nat Kimball; and, when it heard Jubal's laugh, it felt encouraged to "tune up" and "hooraw" for Cranford.

It seemed a good omen.

The Cranford girls, surrounding Lily Livingston and Kate Strawn, fluttered their little flags, and the old Cranford cheer rocked across the grounds.

Nellie Conner was not there, having returned to Midway, where her mother had remained.

"Oh, we're all right!" cried Lafe, cheerfully; and to prove it he began to nibble an apple.

Something of the old enthusiasm manifested itself; and Phil Kirtland felt encouraged.

"Sure, we're all right!" he cried, hopefully.

The ball had been placed in the center of the checker-board, which gleamed white on the grass.

The referee flipped a coin.

"Heads!" said Sheldon, as the coin spun in the air.

"Tails!" announced the referee, when it fell.

Phil chose the kick-off; and stepped into position himself.

There was not much wind.

The cheers of the fans rose again on the air.

Then——

Punk!

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE GAME BEGINS.

#### CRANFORD.

Jubal Marlin, l. e.  
Bob Brewster, l. t.  
Brodie Strawn, l. g.  
Connie Lynch, center.  
Orson Oxx, r. g.  
Lafe Lampton, r. t.  
Reel Snodgrass, r. e.  
Wilson Crane, q'back.  
Saul Messenger, l. h.  
Phil Kirtland, r. h.  
Tom Lightfoot, f'back.

#### HIGHLAND.

Perlie Hyatt, l. e.  
Sol Russell, l. t.  
Ben Yates, l. g.  
Tom Johnson, center.  
Cale Young, r. g.  
Ezra Littlefield, r. t.  
Link Porter, r. e.  
Phin Hester, q'back.  
Kit Carver, l. h.  
Lee Sheldon, r. h.  
Mat Foster, f'back.

This was the lineup at the opening of the game between Highland and Cranford on that memorable day.

Jack Lightfoot continued to be missing.



The pigskin was flying, and the game was on.

And Jack Lightfoot was not there!

Phil drove the ball to the ten-yard line.

Lee Sheldon caught it there, and punted it back.

Plunk!

Again it was going—sent this time by the foot of Tom Lightfoot.

It was on Highland's thirty-five yards now, and down, in Highland's possession.

Here came the scrimmage.

That young giant, Ezra Littlefield, called by the Cranford boys the "tramp," tried, with others, to bore a hole through the Cranford line at left tackle, and let the man with the ball through there.

He had good aid—with heavy men like Cale Young, Tom Johnson and Ben Yates at his side; and they smashed the Cranford line with almost the force of a battering ram.

But there were good and heavy men there on the other side—Lafe Lampton, Connie Lynch, Brodie Strawn and Bob Brewster, together with Orson Oxx, the fat boy.

The lines swayed and trembled.

Orson Oxx went down.

The man with the ball was driven and pushed right over him.

Yet the ball did not go through for any material gain; for the player who had it was dragged down by Lafe Lampton and Brodie Strawn.

In the next scrimmage the ball went to Lee Sheldon, who jumped with it at Jubal Marlin, left end.

Running with Sheldon were the full-back, half-back and quarter-back, making a strong interference.

At the same time the Highland line was trying to hold the Cranford rush.

Sheldon was so quick and clever that he was almost round the end before Cranford knew who had the ball.

Jubal Marlin tried to stop him, and went down.

Phil Kirtland, who had fallen back, came at him like a charging hound; and with Kirtland were Saul Messenger and Wilson Crane, with Tom Lightfoot still further back.

Sheldon swerved and passed Wilson.

Phil Kirtland made his leap for tackle.

It was finely done, and Sheldon went down.

Yet the ball had been advanced, and was now on the center line.

In the next scrimmage Sheldon drove a flying wedge at Orson Oxx.

Orson was so heavy that he could hardly be dragged or moved out of the way, but he could be knocked down.

He went down now, on his back, clinging to the legs of the Philistines, who ruthlessly walked on Orson's prominent stomach; and, though Lafe and Brodie, and Bob and Connie, tried to hold them, the strong men of Highland, aided by the "tramp," literally lifted and dragged the Cranford line along for a gain of more than five yards.

"Do it again!" Sheldon signaled to his men.

The whirlwind lineup was followed once more by a tremendous smash at the Cranford right guard.

Orson Oxx was clear grit. He clung and hung again, even when he went down; and Lafe and those with him pushed and thrust with all their strength.

"Hold 'em!" Lafe was yelling.

"Through with it!" was Sheldon's order.

Kit Carver, left half-back, was the man with the ball, whom they were driving into the hole which Littlefield and his assistants were opening.

Again the ball went forward, literally lifted and borne right over and through the opposing line.

Cranford's forty-five-yard line had been reached.

"Hold 'em this time!" Phil begged, frantically.

Once more Cranford tried to "hold 'em."

Again Littlefield and his helpers smashed Cranford's right guard. Once more Orson Oxx went down; and again, with Orson down, Lafe and Brodie, Connie and Bob, found they could not hold back that wild Philistine rush, even though Phil had strengthened the line at that point.

The ball went through this time for seven yards.

"Fellows, we've got to hold 'em!" was Phil's despairing admonition.

Again Highland bucked the line.

Orson went down again, with more feet trampling him ruthlessly; and the ball went through.



Orson did not rise this time, when the wild tangle unwound, but lay on the ground, groaning.

Dr. Messenger, who had witnessed the knock-out, rushed upon the field.

"Out of the game!" he said, after a moment; and Orson was lifted and carried to one side.

Even Phil Kirtland, in that moment of temporary defeat, wished for Jack Lightfoot.

"Arlo Kilfoyle!" he cried.

Arlo reported to the referee as substitute right guard.

It was a poor exchange, but the best that Phil could do. Arlo had not Orson's weight and tenacity, nor was he even so good a player, though he was much lighter on his feet and consequently could get about in a livelier manner.

The ball was down, in the hands of the Philistines, between Cranford's twenty-five and thirty-yard line.

Phil was sure that Highland would again try to go through right guard; for a weak spot had developed there.

His guess was true.

Lee Sheldon shot another wedge at that weak point, and this time the man with the ball not only got through, but got clear of the line with it.

A wild scream of applause broke from the lips of the Highland fans when they saw that.

"Go—go—go!" they screamed, encouraging the runner with the ball.

He passed Wilson and Phil Kirtland; and, swerving toward the right side of the field, seemed to have a fair chance to get by every Cranford player and cross the line for goal.

But Tom Lightfoot, full-back, was coming diagonally across from the other side of the gridiron, swinging to go ahead of him, as when a good gunner pulls at a flying wild duck and aims ahead of it to allow for the velocity of the duck.

Tom's calculation of distance and speed was made to a nicety.

He approached the runner, forcing him to swerve; and then seemed himself to slow up, when the runner did.

It was but good generalship; for it is a hard matter to make a tackle when running at full speed.

The man with the ball dodged again.

Down the field came the players in a wild rush, some trying to assist and others to hinder the runner with the ball.

The runner swerved again, bending the upper part of his body, and seemed about to pass Tom Lightfoot.

Tom paid no heed to that swerving of the upper part of the body, but pitched for those twinkling legs.

He caught them, and the runner fell.

The cheers of the Highland fans stopped, and the Cranford yells bellowed forth as wildly as the Highland roar had sounded a moment before.

As the runner struck the ground the ball shot from under his arm.

Tom tried to get it.

Kirtland and Sheldon collided, knocking each other down as they tried to do the same thing.

But Wilson Crane scooped it up as he ran; and, turning like a flash, he passed the hands stretched out to restrain him, and flew toward the Highland goal, which was at the far end of the field.

The Cranford fans yelled again; for they knew if Wilson Crane could once evade the players of Highland, and get a clear field before him, there was not anything on that gridiron could catch him.

Yet Wilson's bold and spectacular attempt was doomed to failure.

He had to swerve to avoid the leap of Kit Carver; and this threw him in toward the "tramp."

The next instant he was Littlefield's victim, and went down, with Littlefield clinging to him.

The ball was down again; but Wilson had carried it back until he had brought it within ten yards of the center line.

It was still on Cranford's side of the line, however—on her forty-five-yard line.

The work had been wild, quick, frantic—the kind of work that sets the spectators to screaming.

As the panting boys hurried for the lineup, they could hear the parrot cackling her wild laughter over the field.

Then came her cheer:

"Hooraw for Cranford! Ha! ha! ha! Hah! hah! hah! Hurrah for Jack Lightfoot!"



"By hemlock, I wisht we had him here, tew!" said Jubal, as if speaking to himself.

But the words were heard, and they found an echo in the heart of every Cranford player.

Even Phil Kirtland, who still desired to captain the team, wished now that Jack Lightfoot was there, for he had no good substitutes, and for lack of them he began to fear the game would be lost to the Philistines.

On the other hand, Lee Sheldon and his men were playing with growing confidence.

They had broken the Cranford line again and again, and had come nigh putting the ball over the goal line.

Yet—they had not done that; and Sheldon was determined to score at least six in the first half. He knew that time was flying.

Cranford, having the ball, now tried the work of smashing the line.

Twice they were held, making each time a gain of but a yard or so.

Phil did not care to risk the loss of the ball on downs; so, in the next scrimmage, he tried, himself, for a punt.

"Hold 'em!" Lafe was yelling, as he tried to hold Littlefield and the other big Philistines long enough to give Phil time to send the ball over.

Sheldon broke through and made a dive at Phil.

Plunk!

Phil's toe struck the pigskin and sent it sailing, before Sheldon could reach him.

It was a good punt, bringing cheers that filled Phil's heart with a warm glow.

But the joy of the Cranford fans was short-lived.

Kit Carver drove the ball back with a punt that sent it sailing well toward Cranford territory.

Wilson Crane tried to get it, but muffed it; and, in another instant, so swiftly do the changes come in a game of football, Perlie Hyatt, the speedy left end of Highland, had the ball and was flying with it for the Cranford goal posts.

Some minutes before the timekeeper had given the time, announcing that but five minutes remained of the first half; and now he was seen to put the whistle to his lips.

Some of the Cranford sympathizers declared that he delayed blowing his whistle long enough to let the Highland runner cross the goal line with the ball.

This was probably false, though it was maintained stubbornly by several people who watched him.

The ball went over the line for a touch-down.

The whistle screamed.

The first half was over.

The Philistines had five; and Cranford had nothing.

## CHAPTER IX.

### WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO JACK.

The all-too-short intermission ended, and the football teams went at it again.

The battle was being fought, and the leader was away.

Where was Jack Lightfoot?

Many had asked that question; but none with such anguished lips and hearts as Mrs. Lightfoot and Daisy, Jack's mother and sister.

Before returning to Midway, Nellie Conner had gone down to the Lightfoot residence to tell them all she knew, and to console them by expressing the belief which she herself feared were not true.

Because of Jack's strange disappearance Daisy did not attend the football game. She was too uneasy about him; and she wondered that anyone could attend, for it seemed to her that it was a time for everyone to become alarmed over Jack's prolonged absence. She did not believe, as so many did, that it was a trick of the Highland players or sympathizers.

Now and then she went to the station, to ascertain if any news had come; and the telegraph operator was under instructions to hire some one to bring to the house any message that might arrive from, or concerning, Jack.

Yet Jack's strange disappearance is not difficult to explain.

The man seen standing by the trunk at the Midway station, and identified by Nellie Conner as the burglar who had assaulted and nearly killed one of her uncles, had been a badly frightened man, when he fled from her and Jack.



In spite of that, Jack might not have fallen into the trouble he did, if, on returning from the house to which he had taken Nellie Conner, he had not chanced to behold the man's skulking on the edge of the town.

The mystery surrounding this man and the trunk—for somehow he connected the man with the trunk—made Jack halt when he came in sight of that skulking figure, and then, after a little hesitation, follow at a cautious gait.

The one thing Jack had not counted on in doing this was that the man had seen him, and now knew that Jack was following him. What he had before only suspected, became to him now a certainty—that Jack and Nellie had come to Midway to "shadow" him.

The criminal who fancies he is "wanted," is nearly always an unduly suspicious man. Everyone who looks at him he is apt to think is watching him and spying on his movements. Men have been so harassed by such a belief that they have voluntarily surrendered to officers and confessed to crimes that no one suspected and which never could have come to light otherwise.

With this feeling in his heart, the man crouched down in the undergrowth and watched Jack's cautious advance. A low, hoarse oath of rage came to his lips.

Just beyond him, in a narrow road that passed here through the woodlands, was a light wagon, with one horse.

Jack could not see that wagon on account of intervening trees.

He supposed the man had gone on; hence he walked straight up to the bushes.

Then the man shot out of the undergrowth with a bound, striking Jack heavily in the breast, and at the same time clutching him by the throat.

A lively fight followed; but the man had the advantage of the surprise, and was, moreover, much the stronger; so that in a short time he had not only choked Jack into a state of subjection, but likewise into one of complete insensibility.

For a moment the man hesitated, after throwing the limp body of the boy on the ground. Black murder was in his heart.

Then a fear of the wolves of the law made him catch Jack up, lift him in his arms, and bear him to the little wagon, into which he tossed him without ceremony.

When Jack returned to partial, and, more slowly, to total consciousness, he discovered that he was in a wagon, or some other vehicle, which was being driven rapidly through some woody place, and that his hands and feet were bound.

He recalled very vividly the fight with the mysterious man.

He thought he had been unconscious and in the wagon but a few minutes; but here he was making another mistake. And he thought he was still just beyond the borders of Midway, which was mistake number three.

For a time, after returning to a sense of himself and his surroundings, Jack lay quiet, trying to determine what to do.

His head and throat throbbed with dull pains, and the cords on his wrists and ankles cut cruelly.

Before he could make up his mind what to do, the man stopped the horse.

Jack watched out of the tail of his eye, as the fellow climbed to the ground; then he began to wrench at the cords which held his hands behind his back.

The knots were tied securely; and he had made no apparent impression on them, when the man caught him by the shoulders, jerked him to the edge of the wagon, and as roughly dragged him out to the ground.

A spirit of desperation seized Jack now.

He tried, wildly, to ram his head into the man's face; and, failing in that, tried to leap up with his bound feet and drive them into the man's stomach.

The man reeled back; and, his supporting arms being gone, Jack toppled over on the ground; for his ankles were tied so tightly together that he was little better off than if he had possessed but one leg.

A wild oath rose from the man's lips, and again that black thought of murder came into his heart.

His hand caught the haft of a knife in his pocket.

Then, again, he restrained himself.

"I'll fix you!" he grunted, savagely.



Lifting Jack again, in spite of the latter's fierce struggles, the man carried him into the woods some distance; and there, producing more rope and cord, bound him to a tree, and forced a gag into his mouth.

"Stay there till you rot!" he snarled. "Nobody will ever find you here, you young hound."

Then he leaped away and was gone, and a minute after Jack heard the wagon being driven off.

Jack was struggling furiously with his bonds and trying at the same time to get the gag out of his mouth.

Forced to desist because of the pain and his failing strength, he began at length to take stock seriously of his situation, and to remind himself forcibly that he was a fool.

Sometimes Jack had a pretty good opinion of himself, and believed he was rather smart; but here he had been cleverly outwitted. The man was driving away safely; and all Jack could do, apparently, was to tell himself how many different kinds of fools he was, and wiggle and strain at the cords that threatened, in time, to cut his hands off at the wrists.

Yet the indomitable spirit that burned forever in the breast of Jack Lightfoot would not let him despair long.

He began at the bonds again, twisting and writhing, until the sweat came out of every pore in spite of the chill of the night.

In his fierce writhings he finally forced the gag from his mouth.

A call for help came from his swollen lips, reaching at first but a short distance; but, later, taking force and volume and ringing loudly through the woods.

It was the "coo-ee" call of the boys of Cranford.

Jack hardly expected that it would catch the ears of any Cranford boy, but he did hope it would reach some person in a house near, or a possible farmer passing along that lonely road.

Apparently, it reached no one.

The fact that he had at length relieved himself of that terrible gag so encouraged Jack that again he began to surge on the cords that held his wrists, ignoring the pain.

His frantic efforts bore fruit at last. The knot slipped; and, after further pulling and tugging, Jack so enlarged the loop that he was able to draw one hand through it.

A low cry of joy came to him; and he at once set about trying to untie the small rope that held his body to the tree.

He felt in his pockets. His knife was gone, and his purse. But, by dint of tremendous exertion, he at length so twisted his body round that he could put his hands on the knots of the rope.

Even after that, it took a long time to untie them, for his frantic pulling had set the knots hard.

The rope came loose at last; and then Jack attacked the cords that held his ankles together.

That was not so hard, and he untied them quickly. Free! Free at last!

Jack could have shouted and wept; but he did nothing of the kind. Though the exultation of victory swelled in his soul, he was so nearly exhausted that he simply dropped back against the tree, and lay there, without sound or motion, until his strength began to return.

When he finally got on his feet, he found himself staggering, as he made his way slowly and painfully to the little thread of road which ran here through the woods.

He recalled distinctly the direction from which the wagon had come.

Taking the back track, for he was sure that would lead him into Midway in a short time, he set out.

But he moved slowly and painfully, feeling his ankles big and clumsy and his feet and whole body heavy. His swollen wrists pained him.

When he came to a small rill that trickled across the road, he drank from the little pool it made at one side of the road, and bathed his swollen wrists and hands in the cold water. The icy touch of the water was grateful, for his wrists were feverish and his lips were swollen and parched.

Then he stumbled on, gathering strength as he walked, and as the time passed, yet not coming to Midway.



Suddenly, coming to a bit of open land, he was surprised by a red glow in the sky.

His watch had been taken by the man. Hence, until that moment, he had not been aware of the lateness of the hour. Now he saw that the red in the sky was from the sun, that was soon to rise; and with a shock discovered that the time was close upon daylight.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE RETURN TO MIDWAY.

It was one o'clock in the afternoon, when Jack Lightfoot fixed his eyes again on the little town of Midway.

Daylight had revealed to him that he was in an utterly unfamiliar section of the country.

He had doubtless taken the wrong road in the darkness. Even before that—if he made that mistake—it had become clear to him that he must have been unconscious a long time in the wagon, and had been driven far from Midway.

He had obtained breakfast at a farmer's house, and learned there just how far he was from the town; he had also tried to hire the farmer to take him in, or to let him have a horse on which he might ride to town himself.

But the fact that he had no money with which to pay for these things rendered it impossible for him to secure the favors.

The farmer probably did not believe his story, and was not willing to run the risk of getting his pay later.

Hence, Jack had been compelled to set his face toward Midway on foot, and trudge the weary, lonely road—and he thought he had never seen one that was more dreary.

Hour after hour, as he plodded along, he thought of the game to be played that afternoon at Cranford.

He was in no condition for football work, though the swelling and the pain had almost left his wrists and ankles.

Twice he secured "lifts" in farmer's wagons, thus getting needed rest.

Yet, as said, it was one o'clock in the afternoon before Jack sighted Midway.

He was then on foot, and was judging of the time by the sun; and he was walking at a rapid gait, for he hoped to catch the train which would pass through Midway at one-thirty for Cranford.

As he came into the border of the town, he heard the rattle of wheels behind him.

Then, to his astonishment, he beheld the man who had slugged him and carried him away in the night; and the man was seated in what was, apparently, the same wagon, and was driving the same horse.

The sight of this man sent the blood in a hot wave into Jack's face.

"The scoundrel!" he muttered. "That I didn't die in the woods is not his fault!"

Jack dodged back out of sight; and, when the man had passed on, he followed the wagon in the direction of the station.

The fellow was not hurrying. Now and then he looked at his watch, or glanced at the sun. These things told Jack that the man was not anxious to get into the town much before the time of the train.

Jack dropped far behind, as the man drove out into the open street that led up to the railway; but when the other disappeared at the side of the station Jack broke into a fast run.

He had forgotten his weariness, forgotten everything, but the quick desire that had come to him to bring about the arrest of this villain there in Midway.

As he came up to the station platform, on the side opposite to that taken by the man, he heard a sudden outcry; and running quickly round in front, he saw the man engaged in a hot fight with Joel Thornberry.

"Hold him!" Jack yelled, sprinting to Joel's aid.

Joel had incautiously jumped upon the man when the latter walked out upon the platform, for Joel had more courage than discretion at times; and now he was getting decidedly the worst of the bargain. For, though he fought at first like a wild cat, the man secured a throat-hold, and was squeezing the breath out of the plucky boy.

The ticket agent came rushing out from his little room, crying: "Here! here!"

Then Jack Lightfoot was in the midst of the mêlée.

He sprang at the man who was choking Joel black



in the face; and, grappling boldly with him, tried to pull him away.

The man half relaxed his hold, and Jack thought he saw the gleam of a weapon.

It was not a time for mild measures, and Jack's hard right fist flashed in the air. The next instant it tumbled the man over half senseless, with a blow that was enough to have downed a mule.

The fellow rolled over on the platform, gurgling as if in death.

"Here! here!" the ticket agent was protesting, hopping about excitedly.

Instead of heeding him, Jack flung himself on the man who lay prostrate, and, taking him by the throat, sung out for the agent to get something to tie him with.

The agent stood in bewildered hesitation.

Jack was about to smash the man in the face again, to subdue him as he began to struggle, when heavy boots thudded on the planks, and Kennedy, the constable, came jumping along, swinging his club.

He and Joel had together been watching the station, without saying anything to the agent about it; but by chance the plucky constable had been some distance away when Joel made his rash attack.

"Help!" Jack bawled to Kennedy.

And Kennedy "helped," by snapping handcuffs on the man's wrists.

As he was doing this, the train Jack had been expecting to flag at that station and take for Cranford roared by without stopping.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### JACK LIGHTFOOT'S GREAT KICK.

The Cranford football team was fighting desperately to hold the Highland Philistines.

The second half was being played, and the game was now a tie, with a score of five for each side.

Suddenly a wild cheer arose from the spectators grouped near the old baseball grand stand.

That cheer ran round the field, and in the midst of the cheering a name was heard:

"Jack Lightfoot! Jack Lightfoot!"

A rough cart, driven rapidly from the Cranford station, was nearing the grounds—being so near now that the three figures in it could be made out distinctly.

One was Jack Lightfoot, the other was Nellie Conner, and the third, the driver, was Jerry Mulligan.

Jack's face was aflame with hope and energy. He saw that the game was still on.

At the station he had been told that it was going against Cranford.

He had said he must get there; and Jerry Mulligan, that broth of an Irish lad, who chanced to be at the station at the time with his horse and cart, said he would put him there "befure the game finished, or die thryin'."

Jerry's cart had never before gone through the streets of Cranford in that wild fashion.

The yell grew wilder, as more voices took it up:

"Jack Lightfoot! Jack Lightfoot!"

The ball was down, on Cranford's forty-yard line, and in possession of Highland, who had been driving resistlessly through the Cranford line.

Arlo Kilfoyle, a failure at right guard, but who had been doing as well as he could, was knocked out, having been hurled unconscious when the ball went through the line the last time.

"Jack Lightfoot in as right guard, in Kilfoyle's place," shouted Phil Kirtland to the referee, his heart swelling strangely when he saw Jack whirled into the ground in that cart, with Jack waving his hand, and Nellie standing up beside him, clutching him with one hand to steady herself, and waving her handkerchief with the other.

Nellie's fair face was flaming with color as much as Jack's, and she seemed equally as excited.

"Jack Lightfoot! Jack Lightfoot!" went bellowing round the field, as a mob of spectators tried to press forward and get to him.

Jack jumped out of the cart, extended his arms, and swung Nellie to the ground.

"Hooray fer Jack; and ut's me that says ut!" Jerry squalled, steadying his jumping horse, which he had so driven that it was as panicky as a colt.

The yell was responded to by a wild outburst of cheers.



"In as right guard!" said Phil, eagerly, his dark eyes shining. "But he must have time to get into his togs. Give him time to change his clothes."

The time was given, in spite of Lee Sheldon's "kick."

Lee did not want Jack to go into the game. As things stood, he felt almost sure of winning it, having the ball, and being that far down the field with it; but if Jack came in that might change the face of things. He feared Jack's playing abilities, and more than that even, he feared his influence on the Cranford team.

All the Cranford players were crowding round Jack, yelling. Even Phil Kirtland was voicing his delight. Kirtland feared defeat, and he hoped to win with Jack in Kilfoyle's place.

Jack ran to the dressing room.

His own clothing was not there, but another suit was which fitted him.

In a short time he was back on the gridiron, ready for the fray, and with the battle light in his eyes. He did not have time to explain, nor answer any of the questions which were being hurled at him from every side, for time was up.

Jack had forgotten, or now ignored, the weakness and weariness which had assailed him earlier in the day. At Midway he had been given time to rest before the coming of the train which finally took him and Nellie to Cranford; and he had been given time, also, to get a dinner, which he sadly needed.

Added to that was the fighting fire of enthusiasm, and the knowledge that he was so sorely needed on the football field. His eyes sparkled and his face glowed.

The lines formed. And Lee Sheldon once more hurled his warriors of the pigskin at the Cranford line.

But they met the assault now, a stone wall.

Jack Lightfoot was in Kilfoyle's place as guard; and, besides, his tremendous strength and skill, his mere presence, and his coming at that time, had put such fire and spirit into the Cranford team that they seemed to have been transformed.

"Hold 'em!" yelled Phil.

The lines heaved and swayed.

Cranford "held 'em;" and the ball went down.

Once more Sheldon shot a mass formation at the line, and once more he failed to break it.

Jack knew what the next play would be.

It came, as he anticipated.

While Highland tried to hold the Cranford line Lee Sheldon dropped back to kick the ball over.

Jack Lightfoot, with Lafe Lampton on one side and Connie Lynch on the other, broke the line, smashing down Sidney Talbot and George Steele, who vainly tried to hold them; and then, with a mighty bound, Jack sprang forward and upward, just as the ball shot from Sheldon's toe with a "punk!"

Jack caught the ball, and the next moment he had fallen on it.

The ball was Cranford's.

The Cranford cheer rose now like a wild Indian yell from the Cranford fans.

In the scrimmage that followed, Jack Lightfoot took the ball, while Lafe and Connie and the others held the line; and, running with Wilson Crane as interference, Jack and Wilson went through Highland's left end.

Lee Sheldon had dropped back for some such movement as this.

There was no better player in the Philistines than Sheldon. The "tramp" had more strength, but Sheldon was the fellow who had the head.

Now he sent Kit Carver at Jack; leaping, himself, after a sharp run, straight at Wilson.

Wilson was pulled down; and Jack was tackled successfully.

The ball was still Cranford's, and it was now on Highland's forty-yard line.

"Five minutes to play!"

Jack had heard that announcement some time before. In the whirl and rush of the game it is impossible to gauge time accurately, but he was sure that the five minutes was nearly up.

Could the game be won in the time that remained?

Phil Kirtland understood the critical character of the situation fully as well as Jack.

"Can you punt it over?" he whispered, as the swift lineup was rushing into position.

"I can try!"

It seemed the one hope.



Yet the goal was forty yards away, and the wind had turned veery.

Once more the lines faced each other, eager as warriors waiting the order to charge.

The ball was snapped back, and came, with a quick, sure motion, from Wilson Crane into Jack's hands.

There was an instant of breathless silence before the Highlanders knew that the ball was in motion, and then they smashed at the line, with the hope of breaking through and foiling that kick.

But amid that breathless silence Jack had caught the ball as it was snapped to him from the long fingers of Wilson Crane, the quarter-back; and now, while the Philistine line was held for just a brief instant he made the greatest kick of his life.

The ball shot high, seemingly too high, and a little to the right.

Lafe and Connie, Brodie and Bob, and the others, had held the wild rush of Sheldon's Philistines only long enough; for the ends gave way as that "punk!" sounded, and the "tramp" broke through for a tackle. But he was too late—the ball had gone.

A kicker less cool under trying emergencies than Jack Lightfoot would have tried to drive the ball straight between the goal posts; but Jack had made a quick, yet sure calculation of the force of the wind and the pull of gravitation, just as a scientific gunner calculates the velocity of the wind, and the attraction of the earth when he makes a shot with a rifle at a distant target.

The football boys were running down the field to get under the ball, or be near it if it failed to go over—Lee Sheldon among the foremost of the runners.

The spectators almost stopped breathing.

The wind caught the ball and swung it to the left, and it began to fall slightly; but the propulsion given by Jack's kick had been strong enough, and the height he had lifted it, together with the swerving influence of the wind, shot it over the bar and between the posts.

A wild yell broke out from the throats of the Cranford enthusiasts.

Lee Sheldon made a dive for the ball, hoping yet for time to make five more for his side and tie the game.

But the whistle sounded and the fight was over.

Jack Lightfoot's great kick had won the game.

## CHAPTER XII.

### EXPLANATIONS.

Not until after the game was over and the congratulations had been said amid wild cheers, did the football boys of Cranford know that three other persons whose doings were of interest to them had arrived from Midway on the train which brought Jack and Nellie.

These three were Kennedy, Joel Thornberry and the man who had been captured on the station platform at Midway.

They had not come out to the football field; for Kennedy and Joel had taken their prisoner straight to the Cranford jail, where Kennedy locked him up.

Joel told about it, in his characteristic way, after Jack's friends had heard from him the story of his strange experiences, and had learned how Nellie, chancing to come down to the Midway station and finding Jack there, had decided that she, too, must come on to Cranford, to witness, if possible, the conclusion of the football game which she knew was raging there, and to help in cheering Jack and the other boys on.

Joel's story was told in the gym, to which the boys had invited him.

"Well, by jacks," he said, planting his feet apart and facing the boys as he told it, "that was the greatest mix-up ever; and I'm the boss fool of the menagerie.

"Ye see, I was tryin' to help a certain gent who is a perfeshional detective. He was tryin' to trap the express messenger that was on that train—that train that my trunk was tumbled out of here at your station. I'll tell you this, fer I've got word that he's been arrested.

"Well, the thing that was cut out fer me to do was to watch that said express messenger. I wasn't given any orders how to do it, and I goes at it in my own fool way. I fixed up a trunk that I could git into, as I've already explained to some of you; and I was to git into that trunk and have it put in the express car as express stuff, ye see, with holes cut in it so's I could watch the messenger through the holes. The express company



was losing money and other things out of the express packages and they suspected this man. I thought by lookin' through the trunk I could spot him, mebbe, openin' some package."

He laughed.

"Well, it seemed to me a good sorter scheme. But the fellers that was to h'ist me into the car made a mistake and put me into the baggage car. By jack's, I hope they didn't want me murdered when they done it! but the first thing that was done to that trunk was to up-end it with a jolt that stove the top of my head in, and then left me standing on the remainders of my head with my heels in the air; and then they piled trunks on top of me.

"I'd have hollered to be let out, only I was too scared to, and too shook'up. I thought mebbe I could stand it. I stood it—on my head—till all my brains run out and I didn't know a thing; and then the next I knowed I was comin' to myself and kickin' like thunder, and reaching fer the spring that was to throw the trunk lid open; and then I rolled out in the Cranford baggage room, and tried to set up and saw 'Howdy!' to the handsome girl I seen there, when I keeled over jist like a boat turnin' turtle, and didn't know anything fer a while."

He laughed again, thrusting his hands into his pockets.

"I guess you know most of the rest of it. The feller we captured at Midway wasn't the express messenger I was after, but was another crook that I didn't know nothing about, and wouldn't know nothing about now, if he hadn't thought we was chasing him, and so got himself in a sling.

"He was a smuggler, with a trunk full of laces and silks and things like that. Officers was after him. He had intended, it seems, from what he said, to get to Tidewater with his trunk. He got scared and got off with the trunk in Cranford. Then got scared again, and jumping back to the Cranford station checked his trunk to Midway. That is, he checked a trunk that, in his hurry, he *thought* was his trunk; but he was mistaken, fer it was the trunk I'd rolled out of; he was in too big haste to make sure of it, and I s'pose the likeness of my trunk to his fooled him dead easy. So he

shipped my trunk, with nothing in it, instead of his trunk full of rich goods, which was standing in a far corner of the Cranford baggage room at that very minute. But it's now in the hands of Kennedy.

"So there ye air, gents. I got after him, heard him say something which made me think he'd done things to Jack; then I lost him—and found him ag'in, at the station."

He looked about good-humoredly.

"Some folks are born great, some have greatness thrust upon 'em, and some have the fool luck to fall into greatness when they don't know they're doin' it. That's me. I made a ten-hit with them silks and laces and other things, when I didn't know it."

"But the express messenger?" some one asked.

"Oh, yes—him! Well, he's been arrested, and will go over the road, I reckon; but I didn't really have any hand in that. They caught him with some decoy packages which he opened. When they had the proof, he broke down and told everything."

"What do you suppose the man that captured me was doing with that horse and buggy there near Midway?" Jack asked.

"By jacks, am I a prophet? How should I know? But I can make a guess, and one guess is as good as another. I think he was intending to fly the country, by striking across to the other railroad, south of here. He fell in with you; and then, changing his mind, and mebbe not liking to git too far away from them silks and laces and other things, he concluded to back-track. He got back as far as Midway, and we nabbed him."

He looked about again smiling and amiable.

"But ther's one thing I'm dead certain of."

"What is it?" Jack demanded, good-naturedly.

"I'm dead certain that if I hadn't been the boss fool of the universe I wouldn't never got into that trunk."

THE END.

Next week's issue, No. 44, will be "Jack Lightfoot's Duck-Blind; or, A Strange Mystery of the Swamp." This is another fine outing story, picturing the sport of duck hunting, and giving, besides, an interesting and exciting tale in the strange mystery of the swamp. It is a story you are sure to like.



# HOW TO DO THINGS

By AN OLD ATHLETE.

Timely essays and hints upon various athletic sports and pastimes, in which our boys are usually deeply interested, and told in a way that may be easily understood. Instructive articles may be found in back numbers of the ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY, as follows: No. 31, "How to Make a Cheap Skiff." No. 32, "Archery." No. 33, "Cross-Country Running." No. 34, "The Game of Lacrosse." No. 35, "The Boy With a Hobby for Collecting." No. 36, "Football, and How to Play It." No. 37, "A Practice Game." No. 38, "How to Play Football—Training." No. 39, "The Men in the Line." No. 40, "The Men Behind." No. 41, "Signal Systems." No. 42, "Team Play."

## THE END OF THE SEASON.

This is the last time the editor will have the pleasure of addressing the readers of ALL-SPORTS on football, and if you have enjoyed the talks half as much as he has, if you have derived benefit from the advice of one to whom a chat on the good old game is a seasonable delight, the labor in preparation has been well repaid. We have covered the field of the game, have talked over its many features, and, although the season for playing is not yet ended, we have now reached a point where we can look back over work performed, and derive from such a review valuable knowledge for future work in the same line. It is generally supposed that if fellows play through a good football season one year, the next will find them ready to play again. We hope that the boys of ALL-SPORTS feel this way, and in the belief that such is the case, this last paper this year will be devoted to a talk on preparations for next year.

As we said in the last paragraph, it is a good thing for us, when we have completed any work, to sit down and review its doing. Suppose you fellows who have been playing football these last few weeks, who have worked hard together and have acquired a certain amount of skill both individually and as a team, now that the season will soon be at an end, cast a glance backward, compare your work to-day with the work you did when first you donned the moleskin, and see just what you have learned about the game. Ten chances to one, if you do this intelligently, you will see not only the marked improvement in your play, but you will see also how many mistakes you have made which you can correct next season—your individual faults in playing, the weaknesses that came to light in line and back under the hard test of a swift game, the poor policy of certain schemes you prided yourselves on, and more than aught else, the many "short-way-round-and-long-way-home" that have marked the development of your team.

That is the value of such a review of work as we suggest; the final sizing up of short cuts to success that have led to whole or partial failure. If you have the right stuff in you, however, your errors and mistakes will but act as incentives to better work next year. A baby learns to walk by falling down a good many thousand times, but if the baby did not persist in trying to walk, no matter how many times he fell down, he'd never walk. It's the same way in football—as in pretty nearly everything you undertake—you learn through mistakes. Success does not consist in not making mistakes; success consists in not making the *same* mistake twice. So make up your minds to do better work next year and you'll do it, if you correct the weaknesses you have discovered in this year's work.

Are you satisfied with your captain? Has he proved himself a good general, a man who understands the game, his men and the opponents? If you've lost, of course you will say your captain is no good. But don't make rash deductions; don't think your captain is the only one to blame. Perhaps you haven't given him a fair show; perhaps you have let him do all the work and thinking, and then have blundered along after him, and have failed because you weren't wide awake enough to act intelligently when he led. If you have made a mess of things, don't make a worse mess of it by throwing out the only man who amounted to anything. The captain's job is no easy one; if things go right, no one on the team thinks any the better of him, all the success is due to the critic's own fine work; and if things go wrong, everybody blames the captain. So don't be rash in judging your captain, and if he has fairly proved his fitness, hold on to him.

If he hasn't, why, throw him out. No matter how thorough a team may be, if the captain is no good, the team will never amount to anything. Your captain should be the best player you have, a fellow able to carry on the game from start to finish, and play his own position to perfection. More than that, he should be one of those fellows who naturally lead; one of the fellows you like to follow, because you feel safe in following him. He should be the kind of chap who is always bright and cheerful, and never more so than when he has uphill work ahead of him. He must understand how to deal with the other fellows, and be able to work up the play so that his team is always on the fight for its goal. He must size up the other fellows and his opponents, know the scheme to be worked whenever the game is shaky, take advantage of every weakness the opposition develops, and get the most out of his own men. In other words, he must be a good general. On him more than on any other man in the team success constantly depends. The other members must help him to the best of their ability, but in the final test he is it.

Although the practice is not universal, nearly all captains are quarters. With this position the play originates, and here the task of leader can best be performed.

Another matter is the result of experience, the habit of foreseeing, of preparing in advance to make the most of every second of playing. The captain, and through him the team, should know beforehand the nature of the field where a game is to be played. The condition of the ground and the general layout of the field are very important items of information, and you should see that you are not lacking in this information before you go into a game. The field may be uneven—a bad thing for runners; it may have a slope toward one of the goals—a good thing for the opposition. The ground may be soft, either from rain or snow, or from the nature of the soil; if this is so, care must be taken concerning the condition of the players' shoes, the cleats in good shape, and plenty of them; no man can play football unless he can stand firm and sure on his feet.

If, on the contrary, the ground is hard and frozen, attention must be paid to the padding and the various guards against injury afforded by the players' clothing. To know about the sun and wind is also necessary. You can't kick successfully with the sun shining right in the kicker's eyes, nor can you kick well against the wind; and if the wind is strong you can't kick against it at all.

(Continued on page 30.)



# A CHAT WITH YOU

Under this general head we purpose each week to sit around the camp fire, and have a heart-to-heart talk with those of our young readers who care to gather there, answering such letters as may reach us asking for information with regard to various healthy sports, both indoor and out. We should also be glad to hear what you think of the leading characters in your favorite publication. It is the editor's desire to make this department one that will be eagerly read from week to week by every admirer of the Jack Lightfoot stories, and prove to be of valuable assistance in building up manly, healthy Sons of America. All letters received will be answered immediately, but may not appear in print under five weeks, owing to the fact that the publication must go to press far in advance of the date of issue. Those who favor us with correspondence will please bear this in mind, and exercise a little patience.

THE EDITOR.

Having been a constant reader of the ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY, I will send you a few lines. I think it is the best weekly published and like to read it very much. I like Jack the best, and then Lafe, Brodie, Tom and Jerry Mulligan. I like baseball and football. I wish Jack and his friends would start playing football. I would like to ask you one question. I would like to know how to strengthen a weak stomach. Hoping to see this in print, I remain,  
HJAJMAR GUSTAFSON.  
St. Paul, Minn.

You have ere now read the football stories and we trust, enjoyed them very much. Pay better attention to your food, notice what disagrees with you and leave it severely alone. Exercise the muscles of the stomach. You can find out the best method by reading "Frank Merriwell's Book of Athletic Development."

I am just fourteen, and growing so tall and lanky that the boys are constantly making fun of me, calling me "Stilts," "Steeple Chaser" and such things. What can I do to retard my growth? If I keep on at the same rate as I'm doing now, why, when I get to be twenty-one, I'll sure be a corker of about eight feet. This is no joke, either. I'm a regular reader of ALL-SPORTS, and, besides Jack, I like Wilson Crane. He isn't such a great hero, but he's awfully human. I know a fellow built pretty much like Wilson, and that's  
PAN HANDLE.  
Wheeling, W. Va.

Sorry, but if nature intends you to be a freak you will have to grin and bear it. Possibly you are only getting your growth in a rush, and after you reach a certain point there will be nothing further doing. This not infrequently happens with boys of your age. Take a sufficiency of exercise, and eat nourishing food. That is all you can do. Such rapid growth is not the best thing in the world, and frequently a boy so troubled has to be given over in charge of a physician. We trust that the only annoyance you feel springs from the good-natured "chaff" of your chums. Take it all in good part, and they will soon drop their joking. Wilson Crane has some good points, but others of a different character seem to dominate him much of the time. We hope you are like him only in being lanky.

Please enter my name for a year's subscription to your really excellent little weekly. I am the mother of two boys, and while they are still very small, they take the liveliest interest imaginable in the doings of Jack Lightfoot and his friends. My husband was something of an athlete and a firm believer in the strenuous life. Knowing what it did for him in many ways—I lost him in a railroad accident and not by disease, for he was a perfect specimen of physical manhood—I have resolved, if it be possible, to bring up his sons after the same vigorous pattern. If they equal their father in moral and physical things I shall be a proud mother. Now, I know boys, as a rule, are eager to

read, and I believe in supplying them with a sterling quality of reading matter, so that they will have no desire to take after literature that might do them harm. I have examined every copy of ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY from the start, and I wish to state it as my opinion that you are doing a great and glorious work by placing before the youth of our beloved land a publication that has taken such a high moral standard. It must ever work for the upbuilding of character. Its influence will always be for the better things of life, even though this may not show upon the surface immediately. In this great work you have my earnest sympathy and support, as I think you deserve the good will of every mother in the land. It is, and always must be, a great problem with us, how best to bring up our boys to respect everything that is honest and noble, at the same time looking down upon those things calculated to debase one. And in a story of boys' sports that appeals directly to the heart, where could you find a better medium for deftly introducing sentiments that are bound to have an influence, greater or less, upon the mind of the young reader? I hope you will pardon my intruding upon your space at such a length, but I have had it in mind for some time to write you my views, and surely there can be no more important subject to-day before the mothers and fathers of this great republic than molding the characters of the millions of coming citizens who in a little while must take their places in the ranks of those who will rule the destiny of the world. "As the twig's inclined, the tree is bent," and no agency, however humble, that tends to guide boys along the better way, should be ignored. Please do not print my name, which is inclosed on a separate sheet of paper, but allow me to simply sign myself  
Grand Rapids, Mich.

"AN AMERICAN MOTHER."

We have printed this letter in full because of the sentiments it contains. We are proud to have the backing of "An American Mother," and sincerely hope there are many more like her. It is our intention to publish a periodical that, while appealing to a boy's love of all manner of sports, at the same time shows him what credit and honor must always follow the doing of the right thing. And this sort of genuine praise tells us that while we may have our shortcomings, we have not altogether failed to accomplish something.

I have a strong desire to become an all-round athlete, like Jack Lightfoot. Everything I can do to build up my muscles and develop my chest I'm practicing, and having already met with considerable success, I write now to thank you for many words of good advice that from time to time I've picked up in your fine little weekly. I hope you meet with all the success you deserve, and that ALL-SPORTS may flourish for many years. I know of a number of boys about my own age who are reading it, and from the way they talk when comparing notes, as boys will, I am sure it is a favorite journal with them. I used to take several boys' papers over in England, but they have nothing of this sort there; and as I've become enough of a Yankee to enjoy a hot game of baseball instead of cricket, why, the stories on that subject have appealed to me. Give my regards to the writer.  
LEONARD GODFREY.

Brooklyn, N. Y.

Your ambition is laudable enough, and we trust that in due time you may attain all you seek. But while striving after athletic honors, do not forget, Leonard, that Jack was also building up his character and correcting his faults. Go you and do likewise. We trust you are above any of the small failings that so often drag the best and brightest of our boys down.

Perhaps you may be surprised to receive a letter from this Southern city, the capital of old Mexico; but I was a reader of ALL-SPORTS before coming here, and could not let it drop. My father has been sent here to represent his firm in a business that seems to have good chances here, and so it looks as if we might



have to call this our home. It seems to me I can never get accustomed to the strange way of doing things, so different from our own. The climate is really fine, much better than that of central Ohio, where I came from, but the houses, the food, the surroundings are all so different. How homesick I get after eagerly reading a copy of ALL-SPORTS! I do not think I can ever get used to things here. I have no boy friends yet, though I hear of baseball, and shall gladly join a club if the chance comes. The story which Mr. Stevens gives us each week seems like a breath of Paradise to me. Now, don't think I'm getting poetical, but the truth is that they seem to be a link connecting me with the old life. I hope to enjoy the reading of them for many a day. Well, I hope this is not so long that you will doom it to the wastebasket. AMOS G. KITTRIDGE.

City of Mexico, Mex.

Thank you, Amos, for your entertaining letter. We believe you will, after a time, find yourself contented with your surroundings and enter into the sports with vigor, for boys have sports no matter where they may live. Write us again and tell us something of your experiences.

Have you any bound volumes of ALL-SPORTS, either in quarterly or half-yearly size? I ask because I was careless at first and find that my file is very incomplete. Besides, boy friends helped to wear them out, for I never had a fellow visit me but he spent every rainy day in settling down to read all about Jack Lightfoot's adventures. I like the stories as well as anything I ever read in all my life, and surely that ought to tell the story. They seem to appeal to one, just as if the characters were real, everyday boys in the flesh. I think that is the way to judge a writer—at least, my father, who is a lawyer, tells me so. If he, the writer, can put his case before you in such a way that he makes you believe in the characters he draws, then he must be a real artist. Am I right, Mr. Editor, in this view? Please print this in your correspondence department as expressing the good wishes of

"A PRAIRIE BOY ADMIRER."

Fargo, Dak.

We print every word of your letter with pleasure. It must always be a satisfaction to us to hear such favorable comment from our young friends, scattered about the country as they are. Indeed, we sometimes receive communications from foreign parts, and are surprised to know that ALL-SPORTS is read and appreciated by boys living in Mexico, England and even far-off Australia. We have no bound volumes as yet, but all back numbers are in print, and may be secured by inclosing stamps to our counting room, at the rate of five cents a copy.

I've been watching closely of late the way things have been going in the stories, and I've about made up my mind there's a big change coming soon. The author is gradually leading up to it. When he told all about Jack's father, cast away on a lonely island, I just hugged myself and crowded, for I had been telling the other fellows it was coming. I guess Mr. Lightfoot is about due at the little cottage. When he comes, what next? Jack has been hankering after a turn at traveling for some time. And then there's Tom the bookworm. Isn't it about time he has a chance given him to utilize some of that bunch of knowledge he's been cramming with all this while? So up this way we are watching and waiting to see if Jack keeps the promise made long ago, to try a snowshoe hunt for the big moose, up here in our Canada wilds. We Canucks believe we've got just the finest country on the face of the earth, and if Jack ever does come this way he's going to have the best time of his life.

Montreal, Canada.

RODERIC J. MALLET.

We decline to be drawn into any admission, Roderic. That must remain within the author's province entirely. Nevertheless, we must confess that what you say as your deduction seems very reasonable, and we would not be surprised if things came about just as you so shrewdly prophesy.

It may interest you to know that I took a straw vote at the boys' club last week, just to find out for my own satisfaction which publication seemed most popular at present among the fellows. We have a membership of some twenty-three, and our clubroom has a reading department, where some two dozen pub-

lications, such as might be apt to interest American sport-loving boys, are kept on file. ALL-SPORTS came in over the wire a strong leader, with fourteen first and seventeen second choice. I was surprised myself, though it has long been a favorite publication with me. This would indicate that you have surely struck the boys' fancy in getting out so attractive a weekly. I hope it may long flourish, for, in my opinion, such papers do a wonderful amount of good, physically and morally, to the boys of to-day. The principles they stand for are all for the up-building of body and mind, and I'm sure, from my own experience, as well as others I chance to know, their healthy influence is widespread. So far as the boys are concerned, we can't have too many of them. With regards to the Winner Company and the talented author of the Jack Lightfoot stories, I remain,

Brooklyn, N. Y.

ED. S. WISE.

Well, we must confess to considerable surprise, for, while we aim high, we had no idea that in one locality, at least, we had outstripped all our able competitors. What you say must encourage us to go forward with new zeal and energy.

My measurements are as follows: Height, 5 feet 5 inches; weight, 111 pounds; age, nearly 15 years; chest measure, normal, 32 inches; waist, 28 inches almost—this was taken shortly after dinner, so, perhaps, I can't call that normal; hips, 33 inches; thighs, 18½ inches; calves, 13 inches. Please tell me if I am anything like the average?

H. E. D.

Big Rapids, Mich.

You are not far out of the way. It is very hard to strike an average for a growing boy of your age. You could stand a bit more about the chest and less around the waist. But, provided you take plenty of vigorous exercise, we think you will pass muster.

("How to do Things")—Continued from page 28.

On the other hand, to kick with a strong wind is an easy method of getting down the field.

From experience, too, you have learned that the team should have various systems of offense for all kinds of opponents. To play against a team of husky giants you need an altogether different method of playing than that you can use to advantage against a weaker team. You ought to have various methods of play down field, because it frequently happens you can puzzle your opponents by a variety of tactics, and keep them guessing while you make goals. In general, you have proved the value of the old rule, "to save your strength until you have reached the thirty-five-yard line;" after you have passed beyond that line, work for all you're worth. As for defense, that should be as varied as the offense, and is governed by the same rule that controls the latter—the kind of men you are playing against. Never neglect the defense. You can win as many battles by preventing the other side scoring as by scoring yourselves. For all that, it is a clever thing to get a goal before the other team has awakened to the fact that you are playing good and plenty.


What has just been said is of value only as it suggests to you the necessity of a careful review of your work, with the purpose of putting out a better team next year and winning where you lost this. It is the only way you will correct your mistakes, and only by doing that will you attain the success you are striving for. We have frequently advised you to work hard and think hard. It is just as necessary to do this at the end of the season as at the beginning. This isn't the last season you will play. And in football, as in everything else you will ever undertake, it is only by making your mistakes stepping-stones to better work that you will achieve the goal, the final goal of life—honest success in your labor.

All ready, then, for 1906!



# **STIRRING SEA TALES**

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TORIES of the adventures of the gallant American hero, Paul Jones, in the battles he had with the British men-o'-war during the Revolution.

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- 7—Out With Paul Jones; or, Giving Them a Bad Fright Along the English Coast.
- 8—Paul Jones Afloat and Ashore; or, Stirring Adventures in London Town.
- 9—Paul Jones' Swamp Trail; or, Outwitting the Coast Raiders.
- 10—Paul Jones' Defiance; or, How the Virginia Planter Invaded "Robbers' Roost."
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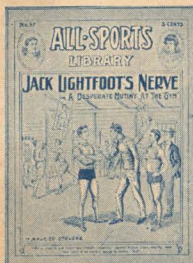
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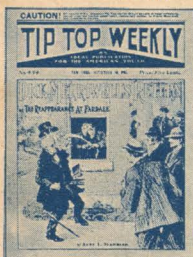
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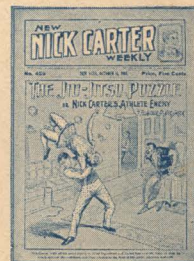
### TIP TOP WEEKLY



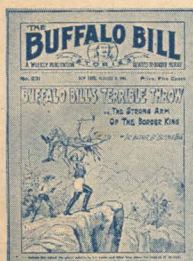
Frank and Dick Merriwell are two brothers whose adventures in college and on the athletic field are of intense interest to the American boy of to-day. They prove that a boy does not have to be a rowdy to have exciting sport.

### NICK CARTER WEEKLY

We know, boys, that there is no need of introducing to you Nicholas Carter, the greatest sleuth that ever lived. Every number containing the adventures of Nick Carter has a peculiar, but delightful, power of fascination.



### BUFFALO BILL STORIES



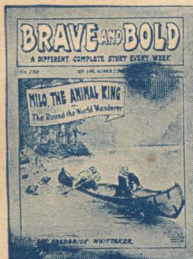
Buffalo Bill is the hero of a thousand exciting adventures among the Redskins. These are given to our boys only in the Buffalo Bill Stories. They are bound to interest and please you.

### PAUL JONES WEEKLY

Do not think for a second, boys, that these stories are a lot of musty history, just sugar-coated. They are all new tales of exciting adventure on land and sea, in all of which boys of your own age took part.



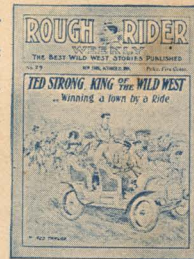
### BRAVE AND BOLD



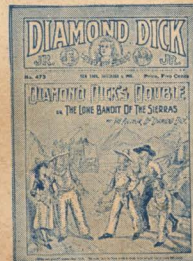
Every boy who prefers variety in his reading matter, ought to be a reader of Brave and Bold. All these were written by authors who are past masters in the art of telling boys' stories. Every tale is complete in itself.

### ROUGH RIDER WEEKLY

Ted Strong was appointed deputy marshal by accident, but he resolves to use his authority and rid his ranch of some very tough bullies. He does it in such a slick way that everyone calls him "King of the Wild West" and he certainly deserves his title.



### DIAMOND DICK WEEKLY



The demand for stirring stories of Western adventure is admirably filled by this library. Every up-to-date boy ought to read just how law and order are established and maintained on our Western plains by Diamond Dick, Bertie, and Handsome Harry.

### BOWERY BOY LIBRARY

The adventures of a poor waif whose only name is "Bowery Billy." Billy is the true product of the streets of New York. No boy can read the tales of his trials without imbibing some of that resource and courage that makes the character of this homeless boy stand out so prominently.

